

COLOMBIA: COUNTER-INSURGENCY VS. COUNTER-NARCOTICS

HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

SEPTEMBER 21, 1999



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

64-317

WASHINGTON : 2000

SENATE CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY, Iowa, *Chairman*
JOSEPH R. BIDEN, Delaware, *Co-Chair*

JEFF SESSIONS, Alabama BOB GRAHAM, Florida
MIKE DEWINE, Ohio DIANNE FEINSTEIN, California
SPENCER ABRAHAM, Michigan

WM. J. OLSON, *Staff Director*
MARCIA S. LEE, *Minority Staff Director*

CONTENTS

OPENING STATEMENT

	Page
Sen. Charles E. Grassley	1
Sen. Mike DeWine	3
Sen. Jeff Sessions	6

PANEL I

Rand Beers, Assistant Secretary, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, Department of State	7
Prepared Statement	11
Brian E. Sheridan, Assistant Secretary, Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, Department of Defense	18
Prepared Statement	20
General Charles E. Wilhelm, Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command, Department of Defense	30
Prepared Statement	31

PANEL II

Bernard Aronson, Chairman, ACON Investments	74
Prepared Statement	79
Michael Shifter, Senior Fellow, Inter-American Dialogue	85
Prepared Statement	88

SUBMITTED QUESTIONS

Rand Beers, Assistant Secretary, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, Department of State	105
General Charles E. Wilhelm, Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command, Department of Defense	161
Brian E. Sheridan, Assistant Secretary, Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, Department of Defense	176
Bernard Aronson, Chairman, ACON Investments	185
Michael Shifter, Senior Fellow, Inter-American Dialogue	187

COUNTER-INSURGENCY VS. COUNTER-NARCOTICS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1999

U.S. SENATE,
CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL,
Washington, DC.

The caucus met, pursuant to notice, at 9:03 a.m., in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Charles E. Grassley, chairman of the caucus, presiding.

Present: Senators Grassley, Sessions, DeWine, and Graham.

Chairman GRASSLEY. I thank everybody for coming out at a fairly early morning, the first morning after a long weekend break of Congress. And it is not exactly an ideal time to have an important hearing like we are having, but the schedule of the Congress dictates, both for policy reasons as well as for the time we are in the legislative session, to move forward with this very important issue.

We also will have the privilege of having other Members, one of whom is present, Senator DeWine, but others will be coming who have urged me to have this hearing. And I appreciate very much the breadth of interest we have in the situation in Colombia from all members of the caucus, particularly as it relates to the efforts we have in this country to combat drugs.

Today's hearing concerns one of the most important foreign policy issues that we currently face. It is one that directly affects U.S. interests and the lives of U.S. citizens daily. It is not remote, it is not abstract, it is not obscure. Yet, we seem to find ourselves in the midst of a muddle. U.S. policy appears to be adrift and our focus is blurred.

We are today going to focus on the current situation in Colombia and the nature of our efforts to stop drug production and transiting. I must confess some disappointment about that current situation and the nature of our efforts. On this, one of the most critical items on our national agenda, what to do about the drug threat, there does not appear to be a coherent strategy or a consistent policy. And if there is, then there has been a distinct failure to explain these to Congress or the public, and this is particularly true when it comes to the country of Colombia that we are looking at in this hearing today.

There has been a lot of talk about Colombia recently, but there does not seem to me to be much of a strategy. There might be some actions taken, but actions do not state policy. I am frankly disappointed in the administration's failure to engage in a serious discussion with Congress or the public to explain its policy. What we see is piecemeal engagement in a situation that is not adequately

understood. We seem to be bent on asking what color to paint the helicopters before we ask what it is that we are doing or whether we should be doing it at all, or if we should, what is needed and what responsibilities the government of Colombia has.

There are a host of basic questions elemental to a sound strategy that are going begging. I do not question, though, the sense of purpose or the dedication of the many men and women, Americans and Colombians, who daily put their lives at risk to stop illegal drugs. But their actions need to add up to more than the sum of the parts if we are going to make a difference. Actions need a center and a focus; they need direction and coherence. And above all, these actions need to be linked in a sensible way to our resources. All of these things need to be linked to outcomes that purchase a difference. Finally, they need to be explained clearly and straightforwardly to ensure public support. I am concerned that we lack these vital connective tissues.

Reporting from Bogota strongly suggests that our whole policy is in disarray at a time when Colombia is in the midst of a major crisis. There has been drug smuggling from the U.S. embassy. Despite years of focus on eradication, drug cultivation continues to increase. If preliminary analysis is to be believed, it has almost doubled. Further, our estimates of cocaine production are also seriously flawed, perhaps underestimating the production by 100 percent. Colombia today is producing more cocaine than at any time since we began our efforts there.

The insurgents, while not in a position to seize power, are growing in strength and profiting from drug smuggling. In some cases, they are better armed and better trained than the military. The military, conversely, suffers from a variety of systemic and institutional problems, and these are problems of long standing. It lacks equipment, training, resources, and appropriate manpower. Paramilitary groups with possible links to the military are waging their own war against the state. The peace process appears to be stalled. Violence is escalating. The judiciary system appears unable to cope, and Colombia is in the midst of a major financial recession.

Yet, the U.S. administration seems to be incapable of thinking about the situation with any clarity or articulating a strategy with transparency. It seems unwilling to explain its policy or even to explain the lack of one. It seems confused as to what has actually happened. I would cite just one example. It would appear that the present tendency in U.S. policy would have us more deeply involved in Colombia's insurgency. Reports show that the guerrillas are now engaged in a major way in protecting and profiting from the drug trade.

If so, and we plan to expand efforts to go after that trade, then stepped efforts to deal with increased drug production involves us in confronting the guerrillas. This raises a host of questions that have yet to be adequately addressed by the administration. It certainly has not explained its policy to Congress or the public, and we are left with the appearance of a policy of drift and dissembling.

The drug czar, having opposed supplemental drug funding last year, is now asking other Cabinet members to support a \$1 billion proposal of his own, much of which is to go to Colombia. I hope that before any such request comes before Congress, if it should,

that the proposal has more in it than just a wish list. The President has written to Senator Lott and Speaker Hastert about the need to work cooperatively to aid Colombia. I agree with that, but we need to know more about this. We need something to work with, and this does not mean another long list of goodies without thought as to purpose and results.

So the situation, as I see it, is past the point when the sort of ad hoc, Chicken Little strategies that have characterized recent foreign policy will do in this instance. It is embarrassing that we have so little before the Congress or the American public by way of serious policy or honest discussion on what we are to do.

Yet, we have billion-dollar proposals being floated and emergency aid requests submitted. I hope the hearing today can help us get closer to both an understanding that meets the circumstances. If our witnesses today cannot get us closer to where we need to be, I am going to look at another hearing where we can hear from witnesses who can tell us more.

I hope, however, that we will hear today more about what a proper strategy should look like, and I will be offering legislation later this week specifically requiring the administration to deliver to Congress a detailed strategy on Colombia. The administration should have one already on the shelf, so the request, I hope, would not be burdensome. I hope that we will hear much more about that policy today.

I am going to explain something about the charts, but before I do, I think I will go to opening comments from my colleagues, if they have any opening comments.

Senator DeWine, and then Senator Sessions.

Senator DEWINE. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I just want to congratulate you for holding this hearing. I thank our witnesses for being here. We really look forward to your testimony.

I think we all know that this country and this hemisphere faces a very serious crisis in regard to what is going on in Colombia. Last November, I again visited Colombia and I had the opportunity, among other things, to meet with President Pastrana, as well as the police and military leaders, to discuss how our two countries could work together better to eliminate drugs from our hemisphere.

The deteriorating situation in Colombia, Mr. Chairman, represents a grave threat to not just the democracy of Colombia, but regional stability as well, and I think that that is something that we need to be very concerned about. What we really have here, Mr. Chairman, maybe to state the obvious, but sometimes you have to do that—what we have in Colombia is a number of different wars, a war that is being wage by the government against two separate guerrilla groups, a war against ruthless paramilitary organizations, and also against the drug lords who traffic deadly cocaine and heroin into the United States.

For more than three decades, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, otherwise known as the FARC, and the National Liberation Army, the ELN, have both waged the longest running insurgencies in Latin America. It is estimated—and, of course, no one really knows what these figures are, Mr. Chairman, but it is estimated that the ELN has approximately 5,000 guerrillas, while

the FARC is estimated to have a force of approximately 15,000. They represent a serious threat to the country of Colombia and the region. The Colombian military frankly may not be up to the task now to counter these foes; at least at the present time they are not. They lack a serious communications, intelligence and mobility capability.

Mr. Chairman, the drug traffickers are really the lifeline now for the ELN and the FARC, and this is something that we have really not seen, to my knowledge, in world history before. We have insurgency groups' long commitment, who at some point then become enabled and funded to degrees that we a few years ago would have a hard time imagining the amount of money that flows to them. The drug traffickers are a source for weapons and resources for these guerrilla groups. In exchange, they provide protection for the trafficking organizations.

Colombia remains the world's leading producer of cocaine, and a growing producer of some of the world's purest heroin. Sadly, Mr. Chairman, America's drug habit is subsidizing anti-democratic guerrillas in Colombia because the drug traffickers use the rebels to protect their lucrative industry. To attack drug trafficking head-on is a direct attack on the true source of instability in Colombia and the region.

With the help of my colleagues, Senators Coverdell, Graham, you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Sessions, and others, last year we passed our bill, the Western Hemisphere Drug Elimination Act. This was a much-needed step toward eliminating the drug problem at its core, but it was only a first step. This Act authorizes a \$2.7 billion, 3-year investment to rebuild our drug-fighting capability outside our borders.

This law, Mr. Chairman, is about reclaiming the Federal Government's responsibility—and I might say it is our sole responsibility as far as the different units of Government. I believe in a balanced drug approach. I think we have to have drug treatment. I think we have to have education and we have to have domestic law enforcement. But this is the one area, the fourth component, international interdiction, where only the Federal Government can act. The States cannot act. The State of Ohio cannot act, the State of Alabama cannot act. Only the Federal Government can act, and I think last year we began the process of reclaiming this responsibility that really is solely ours.

Passage of that bill is proof that Congress is providing the leadership in the fight against drugs. We passed this bill because frankly the administration, sadly, since coming into office has slashed funding levels for international counter-narcotics efforts. Last year, however, through our bill we made an \$800 million investment in previously under-funded programs.

The facts are, Mr. Chairman, that if you look at the percentage of our anti-drug budget, what we have seen during the Clinton administration is a cut in the percentage of the dollars that we are putting toward our anti-drug effort. The actual raw dollars have stayed about the same, but if you look at our international drug interdiction effort, what you find is those dollars have remained fairly constant. But the percentage of our total anti-drug budget has dropped year after year after year, the percentage of our total

anti-drug budget that goes for international interdiction, which is what I am talking about. Last year, we reversed that trend. I think it is very important, Mr. Chairman, that we continue to work in this area this year to continue what we started last year.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to fighting the ELN and the FARC, Colombia also is waging a war against an umbrella organization of about, it is estimated, 5,000 rogue paramilitary armed combatants, whose self-appointed mission is to counter the grip of leftist guerrillas and neutralize anyone suspected of associating with the guerrillas; again, one more war that Colombia has to fight. We have not focused much attention, at least in public discussions, on the need to counter the paramilitaries, but they too benefit from the drug trade and account for a significant number of violent incidents in Colombia.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the United States must take a proactive action in Colombia. The question that we will explore today, however, is what is our role. And I think again, to state the obvious, this is Colombia's battle; this is not the United States'. This is a democratically-elected government in Colombia, and we must work with them. And much as sometimes we may think we know better how they should deal with their internal problems, it is a democratically-elected government and President Pastrana is working very hard to try to deal with these problems.

We must work with them and we must be there to assist them, and I think one of the messages that Congress has to send and that the President has to send is just that. We believe in democracy, we believe in governments making their own decisions about how they deal with their own internal problems. There are a number of serious problems that this country has, the country of Colombia has. What happens in Colombia is vitally important to the United States. When drugs are found in Cleveland or Dayton, Ohio, the odds are very heavy they may very well come from Colombia, or may originate in Colombia.

When we look at the regional stability of the region, all we have to do is look at the map and see where Colombia is. And we have already seen some of these battles spilling out and the consequences being felt by other countries in the region. And the other countries in the region are very, very sensitive to what is going on in Colombia. So what happens in Colombia is in our own backyard.

It is time, frankly, that this country began to pay collectively, all of us—Congress, the President, and the American people, began to pay a lot more attention to what is going on in Colombia because in many respects what goes on in Colombia has a lot more influence on what happens in the United States, whether it be Iowa or Ohio or Alabama, than something that happens 2,000, 3,000 miles away.

So I applaud you for holding this hearing. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on an issue that frankly is not going to go away. It is going to become more and more important, and I think the American people are going to understand in the weeks and months ahead the importance of what is happening in Colombia to the United States, to regional stability, and to our goal of frankly seeing democracy flourish in this hemisphere.

That is really what is at stake, two things. One is drugs coming into the United States, from a very selfish point of view and from a parochial point of view. But what also is at stake is the legitimacy and the survival of the government of Colombia.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Thank you, Senator DeWine.

Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just briefly like to associate myself with both of your remarks and to say that I have been mentioning for some time now Colombia specifically as an area that this Nation has not given effective attention to. It is in our neighborhood. It is critical to the Western Hemisphere. It is a great nation, a longtime democracy of fine people who are suffering the agony of major drug distribution networks, cartels. And now we are looking at a strong and aggressive guerrilla effort.

We have spent well over \$20 billion on the effort in the Balkans that is not in our backyard. And I have wondered how it is that we now are sitting by and we have the Chinese communists having ports at both ends of the Panama Canal that clearly can subject that canal to sabotage and military attack, whenever they would choose. And now we are seeing Colombia in agony dealing with a Marxist guerrilla group and the amount of drugs coming out of Colombia and being produced there increasing. The numbers in the New York Times showed that we had 165 metric tons of production in 1993, and it is expected to hit 250 tons this year. That is a big increase.

So I do not know what is happening, but I believe that this Government has been asleep at the switch. I believe we have not been alert to this problem. I am not at all sure how we ought to go about it, but I do believe it is a priority for us as a Nation, Mr. Chairman, and I thank you for highlighting it.

Chairman GRASSLEY. I am going to call attention to the two charts—well, one chart and one map. The first chart will show a tremendous increase in the number of hectares that are in cultivation, the number of acres that have been sprayed, and the amount of coca that has actually been killed as a result of that activity. It shows a trend in coca cultivation and cocaine production in the Andean region for 1996 through 1998.

I would also like to have my colleagues today especially focus on the map of Colombia that we have set up, and we will be talking a lot about geographic areas around the country and hopefully this map will be of a lot of help. This map is provided by the General Accounting Office. The brown areas show where coca cultivation is concentrated. And then we are going to overlay that now with a red shaded area showing opium cultivation and how that has grown. And then with the final overlay, the blue shaded area denotes the regions controlled by insurgent groups. There are also smaller versions of this map, including a new one showing where the demilitarized zone is located, in each Member's packet.

Before I introduce the panel, I also would like to implore, when we make a request to have our testimony two days ahead of time, that that does mean two days. I know that obtaining clearance for some of this hearing from OMB is a very necessary process and we do not argue with that, but it makes it very difficult for us to be

able to prepare for a hearing when we do not have the testimony on time as we have requested it in our letter.

The first panel consists of Rand Beers, the Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs with the Department of State. Then we will have Brian Sheridan, Assistant Secretary for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict from the Department of Defense, and then lastly, General Charles Wilhelm, Commander in Chief of U.S. SOUTHCOM in the Department of Defense.

I thank you all for being here, and we will start with you, Mr. Beers, and we will have all of you testify and then we will ask questions afterwards. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF RAND BEERS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. BEERS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the caucus. I want to thank you for this opportunity to be here today to talk about the situation in Colombia and our ongoing policy review. As is almost always the case, you have organized the hearing with an absolutely appropriate time frame in terms of where policy deliberations are and where we are in terms of our discussions with the government of Colombia.

What the United States does or does not do in Colombia over the next few years, and perhaps over the next several months, will have a great impact on the future of that country, and I daresay the United States as well. Colombia's national sovereignty is increasingly threatened not from any democratic elements in the military or the political sphere, but from narco-trafficking interests and the well-armed and ruthless guerrillas and paramilitaries to whom they are inextricably linked.

Although the central government in Bogota is not directly at risk, these threats are eroding the authority of the central government and depriving it of the ability to govern in outlying areas. And it is in these very areas where narcotics traffickers, paramilitary and guerrilla groups flourish that the narcotics industry is finding refuge, as you have so ably indicated on the map which you presented at the beginning of the hearing.

The links between narcotics trafficking and the guerrillas and paramilitary movements are well-documented. Reporting indicates that the guerrilla groups protect illicit fields and labs, transport drugs and precursor chemicals within Colombia, run labs, encourage and intimidate peasants to grow coca, accept drugs as payment from narcotics traffickers and resell those drugs for profit, and trade drugs for weapons, including the possible shipment of drugs outside of Colombia to Brazil and Venezuela for such trades. Paramilitary groups also have clear ties to important narcotics traffickers, and obtain much of their funding from those traffickers.

The strength of Colombia's armed insurgent groups has limited the effectiveness of joint U.S.-Colombia counter-narcotics efforts. While aggressive eradication has largely controlled the coca crop in the Guaviare region and is beginning to make inroads in the Caqueta region, any gains that have been made have been more than offset by the explosive growth in the coca crop in Putumayo,

the southernmost area that you have on your map, an area in southern Colombia which until recently has been off limits from spray operations because the Colombian National Police have been unable to secure a base there due to heavy guerrilla presence.

We are also unable to carry out any meaningful alternative development programs in most of the coca-growing region, especially in southern Colombia, because the Colombian government lacks the ability to conduct the monitoring and enforcement necessary for the success of such programs. In order for our counter-narcotics programs ultimately to be successful, we cannot allow certain areas of the country, like Putumayo, to be off limits for counter-narcotics operations.

Fortunately, there are reasons for optimism. The Colombian National Police has continued its superb record of counter-narcotics activity, and now the CNP's commitment to counter-narcotics has also been adopted by the Colombian armed forces. In conjunction with this change in focus, the current military leadership is guarding the country's armed forces through a cultural transformation which, if sustained, bodes well for the future of Colombia.

Defense Minister Ramirez and Armed Forces Commander Tapias have taken dramatic steps to deal with the legacy of human rights abuses and impugnity that have clouded our bilateral relations in the past. Concurrent with this effort to clean up the military is a renewed effort to counter-narcotics. The new leadership realizes that one of the best ways to attack the guerrillas is to attack their financing in the form of narcotics profits, whether through cultivation, processing, or transportation.

The Colombian Army is forming a brand new counter-narcotics brigade specifically designed to work in conjunction with the Colombian National Police on the counter-narcotics mission, initially in the sanctuary areas in southern Colombia. The Colombian Air Force has undertaken an aggressive program to regain control of their air space and deny its use to traffickers by extending north coast operations to southern Colombia. The Colombian Navy is working closely with U.S. forces on maritime interdiction and has participated in many significant seizures, despite limits on equipment and operating funds. The Navy and Marine Corps are now ready for interdiction operations on the Colombian river systems, including in southern Colombia. Overall, cooperation with the Colombian military on counter-narcotics operations has never been better.

INL is working directly with the Colombian military in two important areas. First, we are coordinating with SOUTHCOM and the Department of Defense to provide training and equipment for the Colombian Army's new counter-narcotics battalion that I mentioned previously. The mission of this unit is to conduct counter-narcotics operations initially in southern Colombia and to provide force protection for the Colombian National Police.

In addition to training and equipment which DoD is providing, we are providing mobility to that unit in the form of 18 UH-1N helicopters. We are also working to improve the Colombian security forces' ability to collect, analyze and disseminate intelligence on counter-narcotics activities and on insurgent activity which could threaten counter-narcotics forces.

One of the top priorities of the Pastrana government is implementing a peace process to bring an end to violent conflict that has drained that nation for four decades. One of the key limitations confronting the Pastrana administration during the negotiations, however, is that the guerrillas currently feel little pressure to negotiate. Their intransigence is fueled by the perception that the Colombian armed forces do not pose a threat. This is another reason that we are looking carefully at what we may do to aid the military in its counter-narcotics mission.

Over the past several weeks, the government of Colombia has developed a comprehensive strategy, the Plan Colombia, to address the economic security and drug-related problems facing that country. Colombia has invited the U.S. Government to contribute to the development of this plan and we have worked closely with them for over a month now.

Clearly, it has resource implications. We understand that the majority of the resources will come from Colombia itself or from international financial institutions. Colombia estimates that over the next 3 years, they need to spend \$7.5 billion to deal with the combination of counter-narcotics issues, the economic problems facing the country, and social development issues related to drug trafficking and corruption.

Of that, they plan to spend or taken on additional debt burden of \$4.75 billion, and they are looking to the international community to contribute the remainder of that money and they will be here in town tomorrow to talk to Members of Congress after talking with the President in New York today.

We are currently involved within the administration in discussions regarding about how we can use existing authorities and funds to support the counter-narcotics operations in Colombia, and we are also ready now to work with the Colombians to assess the additional resource implications of their strategy and the optimum ways in which the United States can further assist.

But let me say with respect to the issue of a coherent strategy, Mr. Chairman and members of the caucus, we have been working with the government of Colombia now for over a month. As Senator DeWine said, this is a Colombian problem, this is a Colombian strategy that we have received from them, and we are now in the posture of working with them to define what our role might be in association with them.

It is a strategy that engages all elements of the Colombian government. It is a broad-reaching strategy that includes the relationship of the peace process to the economy, to social development, to the counter-narcotics efforts. The bulk of the resources that they are looking to devote to this effort will go to the counter-narcotics effort. That is \$4.8 billion over 3 years.

It is a strategy designed to go after drug trafficking, particularly in southern Colombia, in order to take the resources away from drug traffickers and to take the resources away from the insurgents who profit from that drug trafficking. If they can move into that area in southern Colombia, the Caqueta-Putumayo area that is in the southernmost area of the country that you have defined on your map, they will have taken on what is currently a sanctuary and what is currently the largest growing area in Colombia for co-

caine. They will not neglect the other areas in the country, but that will be the initial area that they will want to be going into.

I think they have given us an outline of a very coherent and directed strategy that we should be able to work with them in order to deal with. And I hope in the days and weeks ahead that we will be in a better position to come up to respond to your request, Mr. Chairman, that the administration and the Congress engage in a discussion of Colombia, as the President indicated in his response to Senator Lott and to Speaker Hastert.

The problems of narcotics in Colombia are daunting and complex. While it is convenient to think of it in criminal terms, it is undeniably linked at a fundamental level to the equally complex issues of insurgency and paramilitaries, and any action that we take directed at drug trafficking will also have implications for both of those groups. Because of this, it is all the more important to maintain our focus on the counter-narcotics question at hand.

In Colombia, we have a partner who shares our concerns, and a leadership that regularly demonstrates a political will to execute the needed reforms and operations. Our challenge as a neighbor and a partner is to identify the ways in which the U.S. Government can assist the Colombian government and to assure that we are able to deliver that assistance in a timely manner. I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress in the challenge that we face ahead.

Thank you very much.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Beers follows:]

**Statement of Rand Beers
Assistant Secretary of State
Bureau for International Narcotics and
Law Enforcement Affairs
before the
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control**

September 21, 1999

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Caucus:

I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today about the situation in Colombia, and about our on-going policy review. Colombia stands at a critical crossroads now, and there are considerable threats to U.S. national security interests in Colombia. What the United States does or does not do in Colombia over the next few years, and perhaps even over the next several months, will have a great impact on the future of that country.

The Current Situation

It is difficult to describe the current situation in Colombia without sounding alarmist. Colombia's national sovereignty is increasingly threatened -- not from anti-democratic elements in the military or the political sphere, but from well-armed and ruthless guerrillas, paramilitaries and the narcotrafficking interests to whom they are inextricably linked. Although the central government in Bogota is not directly at risk, these threats are slowly eroding the authority of the central government and depriving it of the ability to govern in outlying areas. And it is in these very areas, where the guerrilla groups, paramilitaries and narcotics traffickers flourish, that the narcotics industry is finding refuge.

The links between narcotics trafficking and the guerrilla and paramilitary movements are well documented. We estimate that two-thirds of the FARC fronts and one half of the ELN fronts are involved in narcotics trafficking to one degree or another. By involvement, we mean not just that the guerrilla groups collect "taxes" as they do with all legitimate businesses in areas they control, but that they actively participate in other ways. Reporting indicates that guerrilla groups protect illicit fields and labs, transport drugs and precursor chemicals within Colombia, run labs, encourage or intimidate peasants to grow coca, accept drugs as payment from narcotics traffickers and resell those drugs for profit, trade drugs for weapons, and have even begun to ship drugs out of the country - to Brazil and Venezuela. Estimates of guerrilla income from narcotics trafficking and other illicit activities, such as kidnapping and extortion, are undependable, but it clearly exceeds \$100 million a year, and could be far greater. Of this, some 30 - 40% comes directly from the drug trade. Paramilitary groups also have clear ties to important narcotics traffickers, and obtain much of their funding from traffickers. Carlos Castano, the paramilitary leader, has been previously identified as a significant narcotics trafficker in his own right.

Profits from illegal activities, combined with a weakening economy and high unemployment, have enabled the FARC, in particular, to grow rapidly in terms of manpower. This growth has occurred despite an apparent loss of ideological support in the cities, where polls show extremely low approval ratings for the FARC. Much of their recruiting success occurs in marginalized rural areas where the groups can offer salaries much higher than those paid by legitimate employers. This is an example of an area where counternarcotics efforts will have a spillover effect on Colombia's counterinsurgency successes by reducing funds available to the insurgent groups.

The strength of Colombia's armed insurgent groups has, in turn, limited the effectiveness of joint U.S./Colombian counternarcotics efforts. While aggressive eradication has largely controlled the coca crop in the Guaviare region, and is beginning to make inroads in Caqueta, any gains made in Guaviare have been more than offset by explosive growth in the coca crop in Putumayo, an area which, until recently, has been off-limits for spray operations because the Colombian National Police have been unable to establish a secure base there due to heavy guerrilla presence. Only in recent weeks have eradication operations ventured into Putumayo. Even then, operations have moved no more than 10 miles into the area. Interdiction operations in Putumayo are similarly limited. We are unable to carry out any meaningful alternative development programs in most of the coca-growing region because the Colombian government lacks the ability to conduct the monitoring and enforcement necessary for the success of such programs. In order for our counternarcotics programs to be ultimately successful, we cannot allow certain areas of the country like Putumayo to be off-limits for counternarcotics operations.

Fortunately, there are reasons for optimism. In the Pastrana administration, the U.S. finally has a full and trustworthy partner that shares our counternarcotics goals in Colombia and is committed to full cooperation on the full range of counternarcotics efforts. The Colombian National Police, under the direction of General Serrano, has continued its superb record of counternarcotics activity, reinforcing its image as one of the premier counternarcotics forces in the world. Now, for the first time, the CNP's commitment to counternarcotics has been adopted by the Colombian armed forces.

Historically, Colombia's security forces have not fared well in confrontations with the guerrillas, who, over the last few years, have scored a string of tactical successes. Recently, however, the Colombian military and police have been able to inflict significant defeats on the guerrillas. While these recent engagements give us reason for optimism and are a sign of increasing commitment and aggressiveness by the Colombian armed forces, the Colombian military must still address severe deficiencies in training, doctrine, organization and equipment to be able to deal effectively with the guerrilla and paramilitary threat.

Under its current leadership, the Colombian military is also undergoing a cultural transformation which, if sustained, bodes well for Colombia. Defense Minister Ramirez and Armed Forces Commander Tapias have taken dramatic steps to deal with the legacy

of human rights abuses and impunity that have clouded our bilateral relations in the past. Our human rights report has also documented a steadily declining number of reported human rights violations by the Colombian military. Clearly much work remains to be done to address the problem of human rights in the Colombian military, but we now believe that the will exists to do so.

Concurrent with this effort to clean up the military, is a renewed Colombian military commitment to counternarcotics. The new leadership realizes that one of the best ways to attack the guerrillas is to attack their financing, in the form of narcotics profits. The Colombian Army has greatly expanded cooperation with and support for the Colombian National Police, and is forming a brand new counternarcotics battalion, specifically designed to work directly with the CNP on counternarcotics missions. The Colombian Air Force has undertaken an aggressive program to regain control of their airspace, and deny its use to traffickers. They have registered some significant successes and demonstrated considerable competence and will, but are still limited by outdated equipment, limited operating funds and inadequate training. The Colombian Navy is working closely with U.S. forces on maritime interdiction, and has participated in many significant seizures, despite limits on equipment and operating funds. Overall, cooperation with the Colombian military on counternarcotics operations has never been better.

Joint Counternarcotics Programs

The USG in general, and INL in particular, is involved with the government of Colombia on a wide range of programs in support of our Colombia counternarcotics strategy, which is, in turn, an integral part of the President's Source Zone Strategy. Our strategy for Colombia calls for an integrated program of support for interdiction and eradication efforts, justice sector reform, alternative development, and institutional strengthening. Colombia is the largest single recipient of U.S. counternarcotics assistance, over \$200 million in FY99 alone. Much of this is from the emergency supplemental passed by Congress last year.

In 1998, the joint CNP/INL eradication campaign sprayed record amounts of coca, over 65,000 hectares. In the Guaviare region, where much of the spray effort has been concentrated and which was the center of the Colombian cocaine industry, the crop has decreased more than 30% over the last two years, and very little new cultivation is reported. Similar inroads are being made in the Caqueta region now. Unfortunately, this success has been undermined by the inability of spray aircraft to make meaningful penetration into the Putumayo region, where coca cultivation has increased an astounding 330% over the last two years. The center of gravity of the coca industry in Colombia has clearly shifted.

On the opium poppy front, spray activity has prevented the expansion of the opium poppy crop, which has remained essentially stable for several years. During this time, however, Colombian-origin heroin dramatically increased its market share in the United States, and now increasingly dominates that market, particularly in the eastern

U.S. For that reason, in conjunction with the CNP, we began an intensive opium poppy eradication campaign in December 1998. Already this year, the CNP has sprayed over 7600 hectares of opium poppy, a record total. They have essentially sprayed the entire poppy crop in the Huila growing area and have now shifted operations to Cauca.

We have just begun to provide support for a nascent alternative development program in Colombia - \$5 million in FY99. We are limiting our support to areas in which the government can exercise reasonable control. Experience has taught us that without this control, alternative development cannot succeed because compliance among drug cultivating farmers cannot be monitored and enforced. As a practical matter, this has limited our assistance to programs in the opium poppy region, where the government has a better presence, and where the necessary infrastructure already exists. The alternative development program is being integrated with the aggressive opium poppy eradication program; and combined, the programs aim to eliminate the majority of Colombia's opium poppy crop within three years.

We continue to provide support for the interdiction operations of the Colombian National Police, which have continued at a high rate throughout this year. We are also working closely with the Colombian Air Force to improve the effectiveness of its aerial interdiction program, and its expansion into southern Colombia. To this end, the Department of State is funding facility improvements to the air base at Tres Esquinas, including a runway extension. We are also funding life-extension and night capability upgrades of A-37 interceptor aircraft and, with DOD, are examining the addition of OV-10s to the intercept fleet. Additionally, we are working with the interagency community to provide better detection and monitoring support, not just in Colombia, but throughout the source zone.

We support an administration of justice program in Colombia, working with AID, OPDAT and ICITAP to provide technical assistance and training to the beleaguered Colombian justice system, which continues to be the weakest link in the Colombian counternarcotics effort. We are pressing actively for continued reforms, including improved asset forfeiture procedures, tighter money-laundering enforcement, and stiffer penalties for narcotics trafficking offenses. We are also working with Colombian authorities on improved prison security to ensure that inmates cannot escape or continue to operate their illicit enterprises from behind bars.

We are working directly with the Colombian military in two important areas. First, we are coordinating with SOUTHCOM and DoD to provide training and equipment for the Colombian Army's new counternarcotics battalion. This battalion is a 950-man unit, comprised entirely of personnel who have been vetted by both the Embassy and the State Department to ensure that none of them have been involved in alleged human rights violations. In addition to training and equipment, the USG is providing mobility to the unit in the form of 18 UH-1N helicopters. I understand that the first two phases of training are complete and that the Colombian government believes the full battalion will be operational by January 2000. The mission of this unit is to conduct counternarcotics operations and to provide force protection support to the CNP. This is an important

illustration of the growing ability of the military and the CNP to work cooperatively. Additionally, the clear definition of areas of responsibility for the military vis-a-vis the police strengthen them both as democratic institutions.

We are also working to improve the Colombian security forces' ability to collect, analyze and disseminate intelligence on counternarcotics activity and on insurgent activity which could threaten counternarcotics forces. A key element in this is helping the CNP and the military to share the information they do have, so that all relevant forces have access to the best available information on activity in their area. Intelligence is a force protection issue as well as an operational concern. We are taking steps to ensure that we have all of the information necessary to protect U.S. personnel in the region, including State Dept. contractors helping with the eradication effort and DoD personnel conducting training in non-operational areas.

Peace Process

One of the top priorities of the Pastrana government and of Plan Colombia is implementing a peace process to bring an end to the violent conflict that has drained that nation for four decades. The USG believes in and supports the peace process not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it would be of great benefit to U.S. interests in Colombia. It would stabilize the nation, help Colombia's economy to recover and allow for further improvement in the protection of human rights. More importantly, in the context of this hearing, a successful peace process would restore Colombian government authority in the coca-growing region. The demobilization and reintegration of former insurgents into civil society will remove the umbrella of insurgent and paramilitary protection that the narcotics traffickers currently enjoy.

However, we have made it very clear to the Pastrana government that "peace at any price" is not an acceptable policy. We have consistently asked the Colombian government to press the guerrillas to cease their practices of kidnapping and forced recruitment of children, and to provide a full accounting for the three New Tribes mission members who were kidnapped by the FARC on January 31, 1993. We have also demanded that the FARC turn over to the proper authorities those responsible for the March 4 murder of three U.S. citizen indigenous rights activists. We have made clear to all parties that the peace process must not interfere with counternarcotics cooperation, and that any agreement must permit continued expansion of all aspects of this cooperation, including aerial eradication. The Pastrana government understands our priorities and fully agrees with and supports them.

One of the key limitations confronting the Pastrana administration during the negotiations is the fact that the guerrillas currently feel little pressure to negotiate. Their intransigence is fueled by the perception that the Colombian armed forces do not pose a threat and by profits from narcotics trafficking and other illegal activities that will allow them to continue building their strength through recruiting and arms purchases for the foreseeable future. Essentially, the guerrillas have little reason to negotiate other than an opportunity to rejoin a society they are fighting to destroy. For this reason, we have

encouraged the Colombian government to strengthen its military. Although it may not be possible for Colombia to end the insurgency militarily, we do believe that the Colombian armed forces must improve their capacity to defend the civilian population against guerrilla and paramilitary aggression and defend national sovereignty. Furthermore, a stronger military will enhance the negotiating position of the Colombian government by offering the FARC a much-needed incentive to pursue peace.

Plan Colombia

Over the past several weeks, the government of Colombia has developed a comprehensive strategy, the Plan Colombia, to address the economic, security, and drug-related problems facing that country. By bringing together the various entities already engaged in confronting these issues, the Colombians are producing a unified strategy of mutually supporting actions that will address these interrelated crises. This strategy integrates four fundamental tenets: social development, economic development, integrated counternarcotic strategy, and resolution of the insurgency. All four elements are essential to the success of the plan and all four deserve our support.

Colombia invited the U.S. government to contribute to the development of this plan. An interagency team, under the leadership of Under Secretary Pickering and including representatives from ONDCP, USAID, and the Departments of State, Justice, Defense, Treasury, and Commerce are in an on-going discussion with the Colombian government to determine how we can best support their efforts. Clearly, the Plan Colombia will have resource implications. We expect the major part of these resources to come from Colombia itself and other donors. We are currently involved in discussions within the Administration regarding how we can use existing authorities and funds to support counternarcotics operations. We are ready to work with the Colombians to assess the resource implications of their strategy and the optimum ways in which the United States can assist.

Of primary importance to us with regard to the United States' interest in counternarcotics is the commencement of operations in Putumayo. As long as this region remains a sanctuary for traffickers, progress elsewhere will be undermined. In order to operate effectively in this area, which is heavily dominated by the FARC, the CNP will need the support of the Colombian military. The CNP cannot operate there alone. We must therefore begin working with the Colombian military to bring their capabilities up to a level where they can successfully operate alongside the CNP and contribute to the counternarcotics effort. We are currently examining the needs of the Colombian military forces involved in counternarcotics and searching for ways to steer the appropriate resources toward them. We have no intention of becoming involved in Colombia's counterinsurgency, but we do recognize that given the extensive links between Colombia's guerrilla groups and the narcotics trade, that counternarcotics forces will come into contact with the guerrillas, and must be provided with the means to defend themselves and carry out their mission.

We also believe an active aerial interdiction program is absolutely necessary. In Peru, we have seen the dramatic effect such a program can have on the economics of the drug trade, and we would like to recreate that effect in Colombia. The Colombian Air Force is willing, but requires considerable assistance to carry out the mission. Monies have already been appropriated to upgrade the capabilities of Colombian intercept aircraft. With the Colombian government, we are working to implement a system to better track air traffic in the skies over rural Colombia. Additionally, our governments have established improved means to share a wide range of trafficking-related intelligence.

We cannot forget the Colombian National Police, which maintains primary responsibility for counternarcotics operations in Colombia. While the list of CNP achievements is illustrious, they still have outstanding equipment needs and an ongoing need for operational support.

Finally, we need to continue working to reform the Colombian justice system and provide licit alternatives for coca and opium producers so that they do not replant illicit crops after eradication.

Conclusion

The problem of narcotics in Colombia is daunting and complex. While it is convenient to think of it in criminal terms, it is linked at a fundamental level to the equally complex issue of insurgency, and any action directed at one will have spillover effects on the other. Because of this, it is all the more important to maintain our focus on the counternarcotics question at hand. In Colombia, we have a partner who shares our counternarcotics concerns and a leadership that regularly demonstrates the political will to execute the needed reforms and operations. Our challenge, as a neighbor and a partner, is to identify ways in which the U.S. Government can assist the Colombian government and to assure that we are able to deliver that assistance in a timely manner. I look forward to working closely with Congress as we continue to address these critical issues.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Now, we go to Secretary Sheridan.

**STATEMENT OF BRIAN E. SHERIDAN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY,
SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT, DE-
PARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

Mr. SHERIDAN. Senator Grassley, let me start by echoing Rand's comments that your timing was exquisite on this hearing. This is exactly the right moment to have this dialogue. Let me also thank Senator Sessions, Senator DeWine and Senator Graham for coming also this morning.

Senator DeWine, your leadership last year on the supplemental was very much appreciated by all of us who work in the counter-drug effort. And Senator Graham's longtime interest in the hemisphere and his leadership is well-recognized.

I have submitted a written statement for the record, so my oral comments will be very brief. Speaking from a Department of Defense perspective, we are focusing principally on the cocaine threat that emanates from Colombia. As you well know, approximately 80 percent of the cocaine that enters the United States at some point transits Colombia, as well as a growing percentage of the heroin that enters the U.S. And the cultivation of both coca and poppy continue to flourish in Colombia. That is the threat that we are focused on.

We have been working with the Colombians in counter-narcotics since 1989, when directed to do so by the Congress. Our policy is very simple, it is not confused. It is to eliminate the production of illegal drugs in Colombia, in partnership with the Colombian government. We are not in the counter-insurgency business.

As Rand explained, the situation on the ground in Colombia is increasingly complicated, but our policy is very straightforward. We are working with the Colombian government on counter-narcotics programs. We are not in the counter-insurgency business. Our work with them for the last 10 years has focused on detection and monitoring support and to help them interdict illegal flows of cocaine, training, and intelligence support.

Over the last year or two, we have been involved in a number of initiatives to enhance their air programs, upgrading their aircraft. On the ground, we are focusing on the training of the counter-drug battalion, and on the rivers we are working with them on a revitalized riverine program, both to stop the flow of coca products, but more importantly to interdict the flow of precursor chemicals.

The military has made great strides over the last couple of years in two very important areas, both in its commitment and improvement on human rights grounds, which I think is very commendable, and I think under-noticed, if I might say, in the United States, and under General Tapias and Minister Ramirez a real commitment to reforming the Colombian military to make it more effective as it performs the tasks that the president directs it to perform.

Let me close by echoing Rand's comments that this is a Colombian problem. Senator DeWine, you also mentioned this. They have come up with what we think is a very good, integrated strategy. Our policy is very straightforward to support the democratically-

elected government of Colombia, and that is our task and that is what we are doing.

I look forward to your questions.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Thank you, Mr. Sheridan.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sheridan follows:]

**HONORABLE BRIAN E. SHERIDAN
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COORDINATOR FOR
DRUG ENFORCEMENT POLICY AND SUPPORT
UNITED STATES SENATE
CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL,
21 SEPTEMBER 1999**

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

Senator Grassley, as always it is an honor to appear before this caucus to discuss the Department of Defense's role in United States counterdrug activities as well as how these activities support our national security interests. I particularly welcome the opportunity to address these issues in conjunction with General Wilhelm and Mr. Rand Beers from the State Department. I also want to thank the members of the caucus for their support and interest in the Department's counterdrug program. Congressional support is critical to ensuring progress is made in our struggle against illicit narcotics, especially cocaine. Colombia continues to be the world's leading producer and distributor of cocaine, and over the past two years has seen an explosive growth in cultivation. The importance of the connection between Colombia, cocaine, and the U.S. drug problem cannot be dismissed easily from our minds. The sad fact is that Americans spend thirty-eight billion dollars each year on cocaine. Yet, the threat posed by narco-traffickers in Colombia extends not only to American lives but also to the national security of the U.S. Congress recognized this threat when it passed legislation in 1989 directing the Department of Defense to aid in the war against drugs. In this light, the Department has actively pursued a strategy that not only addresses the on-going drug threat, but in fact has taken steps to address the changing drug trafficking patterns.

Evolution of the Threat

The drug trafficking threat from Colombia has changed significantly from the early 1990s to today. In the early 1990s, Colombian labs processed most of the world's cocaine HCL. Peru on the other hand was the major coca cultivator. For example, in 1993, Peru produced approximately 450 metric tons, that is, more than sixty percent of the world's coca. Since aircraft are the most efficient way to move tons of HCL, the coca base was moved from Peru to Colombia for processing by approximately 1,000 aircraft flights per year. After processing in southeast Colombia, the traffickers would then fly the cocaine from southeastern Colombia to Colombia's north and west coasts for transshipment to the U.S.

Today the picture is different. Colombian labs continue to process most of the world's cocaine HCL and the airbridge from the interior of the country to the northern and western coasts is still in use. However, thanks to Peru's aggressive air-interdiction operations, combined with an efficient coca eradication program, coca cultivation in Peru has declined by fifty-six percent since 1995, to under 250 metric tons in FY98.

On the other hand, Colombian coca growth is surging. It is estimated that more than 200 metric tons will be produced in Colombia this year, doubling over the past few years. This recent explosion in coca production in Colombia can be attributed to the successful air-bridge interdiction efforts in Peru, which hampered the traffickers' ability to move large quantities of coca base into Colombia. Consequently, Colombian cocaine producers spurred farmers to develop new fields, primarily in the southwestern region of Putumayo, and plant higher yield

coca crops. Despite an aggressive U.S. / Colombia aerial coca eradication program, coca cultivation continues to increase.

The threat in Colombia is further amplified by the growing relationship between the narcotraffickers and guerilla / para-military units. These anti-government forces have leveraged their way into the illegal drug trade to finance their violent and inhuman actions which wreak havoc on the general population, hampering further democratic and economic development of the country as a whole. A strong Colombian counternarcotics effort, which significantly diminishes the financial base of the guerilla and para-military units, would help to provide the firm foundation for further democratic and economic growth throughout Colombia.

The government of Colombia, under the leadership of President Pastrana, is actively developing a comprehensive strategy to coordinate the counternarcotics activities of its combined forces. We applaud this independent initiative and look forward to playing a supporting role in order to assist further the Government of Colombia in reaching its strategic goals. However, it should be clearly understood, that Department assistance will maintain its sole focus on counterdrug support, and that any new initiatives will retain that focus. U.S. military personnel will continue to serve, as they have for many years, as trainers in Colombia. Under no circumstances will U.S. military personnel participate or accompany Colombian forces engaged in operations of any sort. This is very much a continuation of current Department policy.... there are no changes here. Furthermore, U.S. support will continue to be contingent upon the human rights vetting process overseen by the State Department -- an area on which the Colombian military has been placing greater emphasis and achieving significant results.

DoD's Role in Counterdrug Activities in Colombia

For six years, counterdrug operations in the cocaine producing regions in South America have served as the focus of this administration's supply reduction programs. The dramatic success of the Peru air interdiction program serves as an example of the merit of this approach. Consistent with this source zone focus, the Department of Defense developed a Colombian strategy designed to attack the Colombian portion of the cocaine threat. The Department's integrated Colombian strategy consists of four strategic efforts. These efforts form a responsive, flexible and integrated interagency campaign that engages the narco-trafficker across the whole spectrum of the illegal narcotics trade. Let me briefly describe the Department's integrated Colombian strategy, General Wilhelm will more fully develop the operational perspective.

Air

The Department's air interdiction effort recognizes that the air movement of cocaine within Colombia is key to the cocaine trade and is vulnerable. Consequently, the administration is focusing on means to deny air transportation from the production regions in the south and east to debarkation points along the Caribbean and Pacific coasts. While there are several elements to developing a productive counterdrug aerial interdiction program, the Puerto Rico Relocatable Over the Horizon Radar (ROTHR) and the modernization of the Colombian Air Forces' A-37 aircraft are key. The Puerto Rico ROTHR will provide the critical air surveillance and cueing necessary for the interception of illegal flights. The Department of Defense, along with the State Department, has embarked on a multi-year initiative to up-grade Colombian A-37s, which will enhance their air intercept capability and improve overall readiness. In FY99, the Department

will spend slightly over five million dollars upgrading Colombian aerial platforms used for interdiction and an additional two million dollars on A-37 training for Colombian pilots.

Riverine

The second strategic effort, riverine interdiction, resulted from the congressionally authorized program to acquire equipment needed to develop and support counterdrug riverine operations in Colombia, with a parallel initiative in Peru. This counterdrug program became necessary due to the concern that drug traffickers would react to the successful Peruvian air interdiction efforts by shifting to smuggling routes that utilized the vast Amazon River network. Furthermore, the rivers provide vital thoroughfares for the movement of essential processing chemicals. Colombia currently fields 18 counterdrug Riverine Combat Elements (RCEs) made up of four boats each. The eventual goal is to deploy a total of 45 RCEs. In FY99, the Department will spend almost five million dollars on boats and equipment for the counterdrug riverine program and an additional two and one-half million dollars for riverine infrastructure development. The Department will also provide riverine training to select units of the Colombian navy, at a cost of two million dollars in FY99.

Ground

U.S. Southern Command's support of the formation of the Colombian counterdrug battalion constitutes the Department's primary element in the ground interdiction effort. U.S. Southern Command is currently training and providing non-lethal equipment for the battalion,

which will be stationed at Tres Esquinas. The training of professional Colombian soldiers began in April 1999 and field exercises are scheduled to be completed in December of this year. All of the select soldiers in the counterdrug battalion have been screened for human rights compliance, in accordance with section 8130 of the Department of Defense Appropriation Act for FY99. This battalion will participate in joint military/Colombian National Police (CNP) counterdrug interdiction and endgame operations in the drug producing regions of Colombia. Approximately seven million dollars will be expended in FY99 and FY00 in support of the counterdrug battalion.

To further enhance counterdrug interdiction operations, the Department is supporting an interagency effort to establish a Colombian Joint Intelligence Center (JIC) which will be collocated with the counterdrug battalion at Tres Esquinas. This center is ideally located in close proximity to one of the major coca growing regions in southern Colombia. The Colombian JIC personnel will be trained and all of the selected soldiers will be screened for human rights compliance, in accordance with section 8130 of the Department of Defense Appropriation Act for FY99. Information disseminated from the JIC will focus joint interdiction operations executed by the CNP and supporting elements of the Colombian military.

Maritime

The fourth strategic effort, maritime interdiction, is designed to increase support to the Colombian maritime forces that combat traffickers who move their drugs via boats and fishing vessels through the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific transit zones. U.S. Navy ships and aircraft, in

conjunction with U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Customs Service assets, patrol the region, passing valuable information to Colombian end-game forces positioned along the coast. These efforts are coordinated through the Joint Interagency Task Force in Key West, Florida.

Regional Systems and Programs

These four strategic efforts are supported by numerous Department systems and programs that provide cueing information for follow-on ground, aerial and maritime interdiction efforts in Colombia and throughout the source nation region. Critical counterdrug systems include ground based radar systems; Re-locatable Over The Horizon Radar (ROTHR) systems; P-3 Maritime Patrol Aircraft, including the Counter Drug Unit (CDU) variant; and airborne early warning aircraft such as AWACS and the E-2 that support the interagency's air interdiction effort, fulfilling the Department's Detection and Monitoring (D&M) mission. The U.S. Army's Airborne Reconnaissance Low (ARL) aircraft and Tactical Analysis Teams programs play pivotal roles in the effort to collect, analyze, and distribute critical intelligence information to CNP and military units engaged in counterdrug operations in the field. These supporting systems and related programs are part of a total Department source nation effort of approximately two-hundred and forty seven million dollars in FY99, much of which has been directed towards the Colombian drug threat.

The final element that is instrumental to the success of the Department's overall assistance program is the full establishment of the planned Forward Operating Locations (FOL). These FOLs support counterdrug operations that had previously staged out of Howard Air Force Base in Panama. The importance of the Department's counterdrug support operations and the

need for a forward-staged U.S. presence to sustain them led Southern Command to develop the current FOL concept. The FOL concept seeks to take advantage of existing airport facilities owned and operated by host nations that are made available under bilateral agreements. Indeed, the concept has already proven its value as U.S. aircraft have continued their detection and monitoring missions on an interim basis from the newly established FOLs in Curacao/Aruba and from Ecuador. The value of U.S. military presence options afforded by FOLs for this mission, specifically the additional location at Manta, Ecuador which is geographically ideal to support D&M missions in southern Colombia, cannot be overstated. We need your support to develop these FOLs fully in order to execute the Department's congressionally directed D&M mission in the Southern Hemisphere.

DoD's Role in non-Operational Activities in Colombia

The first U.S.-Colombia Defense Bilateral Working Group (BWG) meeting took place in March of this year in Bogota, Colombia. This BWG proved to be an important milestone in our bilateral relationship as we broadened our discussion to include several topics, including human rights, military justice reform, and military institutional reform as well as counternarcotics issues. The Colombians were pleased with their interaction with the broad range of Department representatives at the BWG. Both the General Policy and Modernization/Proliferation sub-working groups addressed such areas as military justice reform and disaster relief, on which we will work cooperatively over the next few months. The Counternarcotics Working Group also identified several areas for further exploration. Finally, the Defense Ministry, recognizing that its military may not be optimally structured to address the current threat, is studying far-reaching

reforms that would streamline the military command structure and improve inter-service coordination.

With respect to human rights, there have been measurable Colombian improvements across the board. According to the State Department's Human Rights Reports for the last several years, military involvement in human rights violations has dropped dramatically, from half the total in 1993 to less than three percent last year. The Colombian Army has begun to take steps to discipline officers accused of links to the paramilitary groups. These paramilitary groups are credited with the largest percentage of human rights violations in Colombia. The Colombian Congress has also passed a military justice reform bill. This new law will require military personnel accused of human rights violations to stand trial in civilian courts, and it is expected to be signed into law by President Pastrana shortly.

Conclusion

We face a difficult challenge in Colombia. As in the past, the Department will continue to focus on supporting a coordinated interdiction capability that impacts the entire drug cultivation, production and transportation process. The establishment of the Colombian Joint Intelligence Center and the fielding of the Counterdrug battalion will allow engagement of the critical Putumayo coca growing area and cocaine producing laboratories. The riverine program will furnish Colombia with the capability to engage river smuggling activity effectively. Further, U.S. programs are in place for effective air interdiction. Support of north coast maritime operations will ensure that go-fast boats used for drug smuggling are impeded in their routes. Lastly, the newly formed military bilateral exchange provides a mechanism for potent U.S.-

Colombian cooperation and program development. Even with these initiatives, there is, however, no near-term solution. Success will be achieved as a result of the coordinated, flexible and sustained strategic efforts directed against all facets of the drug trade in Colombia -- cultivation, production, and transit. With congressional support, I am confident that the Department will continue to play an appropriate supporting role in the U.S. counterdrug effort in Colombia.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Now, General Wilhelm. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL CHARLES E. WILHELM, COMMANDER IN CHIEF, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

General WILHELM. Chairman Grassley, distinguished members of the caucus, I am pleased to appear before you this morning to discuss our activities in Colombia. This is a crucial issue and it is one that we at Southern Command believe is of great importance not only to Colombia and to the United States, but to the entire hemisphere.

When I arrived at Southern Command 2 years ago, I described Colombia as the most threatened nation in our hemisphere. Today, I stand behind that assessment. In fact, over the past 2 years the situation in Colombia as it pertains to internal security and stability, if anything, the threats have intensified. Despite that, as I testify before you today, I am cautiously optimistic about Colombia's future. I am optimistic for three reasons.

The first is leadership. I have been in and out of Colombia for a variety of military purposes for over a decade. The current leadership in Colombia from the top down, from the president through the military leadership, is the best, the most ethical, and the most focused that I have ever worked with. Dealing with people like General Tapias, General Serrano, General Mora Rangel, the commander of the Army, General Velasco, the commander of the Air Force, Admiral Garcia, the commander of the Navy, I am dealing with top-flight professionals. These are men with a deep and abiding sense of ethics. They care about their troops and they know what they are doing, and they have a vision for the future. So I am encouraged by the leadership that I see.

The second thing that encourages me and causes me to have some cautious optimism are recently battlefield successes enjoyed by the armed forces. There can be no mistake about it. We watch this very closely. My number was ten; there were ten stinging tactical defeats in succession that were suffered by Colombia's armed security forces. But then we saw the July country-wide offensive initiated by the FARC, and there I saw some not so subtle changes in the complexion of the battlefield.

I visited Colombia. I talked in great length with all of the military leaders. They presented me with convincing and compelling evidence that in a significant number of engagements, the military had prevailed. They prevailed for good reasons. They corrected some of the mistakes that they have made in the past. Their intelligence and intelligence-sharing was much improved. I saw levels of cooperation and coordination between the National Police and the armed forces that I had not seen before. And, finally, I saw unparalleled improvement in air/ground coordination, and that made a major difference during July.

I share the widely held view that the ultimate solution to Colombia's internal turmoil lies at the negotiating table and not on the battlefield. However, for negotiations to succeed, I am convinced that the government must strengthen its negotiating position and I believe that increased leverage at the negotiating table can only be gained on Colombia's battlefields.

The military component of Colombia's emerging national strategy that both Rand and Brian have mentioned targets narco-trafficking as its point of main effort on the military side. I agree with this approach. The best and most efficient way to eliminate the insurgents and para-militaries who are wreaking havoc on 50 percent of the countryside is to eliminate their support base. Deprived of the revenues and other support they derive from their alliance with narco-traffickers, I believe the insurgents will be weakened to the point where they will be compelled to participate in meaningful negotiations that will hopefully lead to peace and reconciliation. Denied an adversary and with reassertion of government control over currently disputed areas, I am equally convinced that the illegal para-military groups will literally die on the vine.

Colombia is headed in the right direction, in my judgment, but to reach their destination, they will need our continued help. We must continue to assist Colombia in its efforts to reform and revitalize its armed forces.

At the same time, we must assure that our own forces are postured to do the job. Accurate and timely intelligence are essential for success against the narco-traffickers and are a key ingredient in our own force protection programs.

As we have drawn from Panama, as we must under the provisions of the 1977 Panama Canal treaties, Southern Command has been required to completely rebuild its theater architecture from the ground up. We have come a long way in the past year. U.S. Army South and Special Operations Command South have completed their migration from Panama to Puerto Rico. We will soon stand up a new Navy component headquarters at Roosevelt Roads. We have merged the two joint interagency task forces that conducted execution, planning, and supervision of our counter-drug operations in both the transit and source zones into a single integrated organization at Key West.

But this morning, from a counter-drug perspective, and I think looking widely at our needs in Colombia, the single most critical part of the architecture is not in place. Probably the most priceless facility that we had on Panama was Howard Air Force Base. That runway closed on the first of May of this year. Previously, during any average year, we had somewhere in the neighborhood of 21 aircraft on the runways and taxiways at Howard Air Force Base, and every year, they flew about 2,000 detection, monitoring, tracking, and intelligence missions in support of our important work in the Andean Ridge.

To compensate for the loss of Howard Air Force Base, we identified a series of forward operating locations, host nation airfields that we would simply negotiate access agreements to and from there conduct the operations that we previously conducted from Howard. Short-term agreements have been reached with the Netherlands and we are operating out of Curacao and Aruba in the Netherlands Antilles and we are closing on a final long-term agreement with Ecuador for the air field at Manta.

The Manta air field is one that I would really like to focus on because it is truly the linchpin in the fall apparatus. Manta gives us the site that we need to provide effective coverage of the crucial Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador borders, all of Peru, and Bolivia, in

simple terms, the deep source where the drugs are grown and produced. It is the linchpin of the apparatus.

We need \$42.8 million in the next fiscal year and a total of \$122.5 million in fiscal year 2000 and 2001 to bring these three FOLs on line, to give them the capacity, the operating, and the safety features that they need to sustain operations at roughly the same tempo that we conducted them previously from Howard Air Force Base.

That request is going to committee, I believe, within the next couple of weeks. Anything that the members of the caucus could do to support this funding would be greatly appreciate and, I think, would aid enormously—enormously—our shared counter-drug efforts with Colombia and the other nations in the source zone.

Mr. Chairman, in your letter of August 12, you highlighted our policy goals in Colombia and the counter-insurgency versus counter-narcotics issue. From a military perspective, I believe our policy in Colombia has been clear and consistent. We have focused exclusively on counter-narcotics assistance. The rules are clearly understood by our troops. We are there to train, equip, and provide technical assistance. We have strictly avoided involvement in field tactical or advisory roles. The direction of the new Colombian strategy, I am glad to say, is consistent with this policy.

Our efforts in Colombia are vitally important. We are profoundly grateful to this caucus for its interest and for your support of our initiatives and I hope that we can count on it in the important weeks and months ahead.

Mr. Chairman and members of the caucus, I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of General Wilhelm follows:]

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE SENATE CAUCUS ON
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL

STATEMENT OF
GENERAL CHARLES E. WILHELM, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
COMMANDER IN CHIEF, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND
BEFORE THE SENATE CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL
21 SEPTEMBER 1999

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE SENATE CAUCUS ON
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Caucus, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss U.S. Southern Command's role in stemming the cultivation, production, and movement of illicit drugs in our Area of Responsibility (AOR) with special emphasis on our counterdrug (CD) efforts in Colombia. In my last appearance before this Caucus, I stated that we have made continued progress in multi-national CD efforts.

I also emphasized that we must sustain our collective successes and continue to squeeze the narcotraffickers on all fronts. Since then, we have achieved some significant successes and some additional challenges have emerged. Today, I will provide an update on the drug threat to U.S. interests in the region, my assessment of the situation in Colombia, a summary of U.S. military support to CD efforts in Colombia, a brief discussion of CD resource requirements, the status of our regional approach, and an overview of our post Panama Theater Architecture.

THE DRUG THREAT

The entrenched and increasingly diverse illegal drug business continues to demonstrate an ability to meet the world demand, and poses increasingly complex challenges to CD efforts throughout our AOR. Cocaine and heroin continue to be a

formidable industry in the Source Zone. Coca is grown almost exclusively in the three Andean countries of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. It is refined into finished Cocaine Hydrochloride (HCl), primarily in Colombia, then transported to world markets, primarily the U.S. In 1998, an estimated 541 metric tons left the Source Zone destined for the U.S. via air, maritime and overland routes. Multinational interdiction efforts seized approximately 147 metric tons. Despite these strong efforts, as much as 394 metric tons arrived at distribution sites in the U.S., largely through our Southwest Border, and Florida.

Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs)

The nature and modus operandi of DTOs are well known. Their primary strength is their ability to operate with significant financial backing and freedom of action in the Source and Transit Zones. Nurtured by a constant U.S. demand for their products, these transnational criminal organizations are resilient, dynamic, and agile. They have adapted and prospered despite the dissolution of traditional cartels. They have proven over time that they can rapidly adjust transit routes and modes in response to U.S. and participating nations interdiction efforts.

Motivated by profit, DTOs are adversely impacting Colombia's infrastructure, economy, and security apparatus. In some areas, DTOs operate with near impunity, controlling ports and many of the rural areas east of the Andean Ridge. Cooperation with insurgents is an integral part of DTO "security arrangements".

These insurgent groups, in turn, have become increasingly dependent on drug profits to arm and sustain themselves.

DTOs possess extensive resources, which are heavily invested in legitimate businesses. Their disregard for national sovereignty allows them to cross national frontiers without fear of retribution and to gain unfair advantages over legitimate business enterprises, which further undermines the civil government. Nevertheless, DTOs are vulnerable. An effective CD effort can drive up the price of illegal drugs causing demand to wane with a concomitant reduction in profit to a point where drug trafficking is no longer a lucrative business.

We know DTOs make every effort to maximize profits. They are continuing to expand cocaine production and export to the U.S., Europe, Asia, and new secondary markets in South America. DTOs are planting a higher yield variety of coca in the Putumayo and Caqueta growing areas in Colombia and are expanding cocaine HCl production within Peru and Bolivia.

COLOMBIA

Marcotrafficking and Insurgency

The threat to Colombia is real and immediate. It is a malignant cancer eating away at the underpinnings of Colombia's economy and governance.

Colombia is the world's largest producer of cocaine HCl. Lack of effective government control over more than 50 percent of

the countryside has allowed coca cultivation in Colombia to increase by 28 percent in 1998 alone and projections indicate additional increases in 1999. Colombia's situation is especially complex because the sophisticated DTOs cooperate with mature insurgencies and illegal paramilitary groups. Colombia's internal armed conflicts persist after nearly 40 years and the loss of more than 35,000 lives on both sides. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) have become increasingly aggressive in recent months, conducting highly publicized kidnappings and initiating clashes with Colombian Security Forces. There were over 220 such incidents during the 6-month period from February to July of this year, highlighted by the Avianca airliner hijacking and the abduction of churchgoers in Cali.

Strong links exist between DTOs and the insurgents in Colombia. Thirty-six of sixty-one FARC fronts and thirteen of fifty-two ELN fronts are known or suspected to receive support from and protect DTOs. The ELN and FARC both profit from their association with DTOs, particularly the FARC which is heavily dependent on DTOs for revenues to finance their insurgent activities. Drug money makes up a major portion of the FARC's war chest and is a primary financial source sustaining force levels, combat operations and weapons purchases.

Today, Colombian Security Forces confront a triangle of violence with themselves on one point, two insurgent groups on

another, and paramilitary organizations on the third. Collectively, the FARC, ELN, and paramilitary groups threaten the democratic and economic security of Colombia, while providing sanctuaries for thriving DTOs. Insurgents also continue to find safe havens in Panama's Darien Province, as well as in Venezuela, Ecuador, and to a lesser extent Peru and Brazil.

We have long recognized that Colombia's problems are international in dimension. The events of the past year have crystallized this point with neighboring countries.

Spillover to Neighboring Countries

In one way or another and to varying degrees, the problems plaguing Colombia impact each of her five neighbors -- Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil and Panama. In the absence of coordinated action, I believe the external effects of Colombia's problems will continue to increase in severity. We are aggressively working with all six countries to encourage a collective approach against a threat they are individually incapable of defeating.

Venezuela, Ecuador and Peru have deployed forces along their borders with Colombia to prevent or limit intrusions by insurgents, narcotraffickers, and paramilitaries. On any given day, Venezuela has approximately 10,000 troops routinely deployed along the Colombian frontier. The resolution of the border dispute between Peru and Ecuador and implementation of the peace accords have allowed both governments to turn their attention away from fighting each other to focusing on regional issues,

such as narcotrafficking. In the case of Ecuador, the economic crisis and civil unrest have limited President Mahuad's options for countering the violence and corruption associated with the drug trade. But despite economic constraints, Ecuador has increased the number of troops and active patrols along the border with Colombia.

Brazil now openly acknowledges that narcotraffickers and insurgents are violating its borders and that drug use is damaging Brazilian society. Incursions by traffickers and the FARC into the Amazon region have caused Brazil to reassess its vulnerabilities. During the past year, the Brazilian Army has reinforced military garrisons along the Colombian border, and the government continues to develop SIVAM, the \$1.4 billion-dollar surveillance system for the Amazon. Brazil has also restructured its national counterdrug organization and system and has intensified military area denial operations in the vast Amazonas State.

Panama's position is more complicated. The abolishment of their military forces following Operation JUST CAUSE left the country with only police forces -- the Panamanian Public Forces (PPF). The PPF are neither manned, trained, nor equipped to confront the heavily armed insurgent and paramilitary units that make repeated incursions into the southern portion of the Darien Province. The FARC enter Panamanian territory to rest and rearm. The paramilitary organizations violate the same territory in

order to seek out and destroy FARC elements. U.S. support and mentorship provide the catalyst to help these countries help themselves.

Colombia's Commitment to Fighting Narcotraffickers

Colombia remains our focus of effort for CD operations. As I stated previously, Colombia's problems are becoming problems for the entire region. In my opinion, the focus for addressing Colombia's internal problems must be on depriving the FARC and ELN of the illegal revenues they receive from narcotraffickers; this in turn will pave the way for a negotiated settlement to the four-decades old insurgency. Tactical defeats suffered by government security forces at the hands of the FARC in recent years have emboldened the FARC and provided little incentive for them to engage in meaningful or substantive peace negotiations with the Government of Colombia (GOC). However, I have been encouraged by the performance of Colombian Security Forces during the FARC's countrywide July offensive and in subsequent engagements. In a number of instances, government forces inflicted substantial losses on the FARC, and we saw encouraging levels of cooperation and coordination among the Colombian Armed Forces (COLAF) and Colombian National Police (CNP). To improve the GOC's position at the negotiating table, the armed forces must continue to upgrade their combat capabilities and sustain recently observed trends of improved performance on the battlefield.

During the Samper Administration we provided substantial assistance to the CNP, but provided little in the way of meaningful help to the COLAF. As a result, Colombian national capabilities are out of balance. We must now increase the capabilities of the armed forces without degrading the capabilities of the CNP. Though professional and well led, the CNP are precisely what their name implies -- they are a police force. They lack the strength in numbers and combined arms capabilities that are required to engage FARC fronts and mobile columns that possess army-like capabilities. This is a mission that the armed forces and only the armed forces can and should undertake. By bringing the capabilities of its armed forces into balance with those of the national police, Colombia can achieve a "one-two punch" with the armed forces preceding the police into narcotics cultivation and production areas and setting the security conditions that are mandatory for safe and productive execution of eradication and other counterdrug operations by the CNP.

Despite the current high level of violence and the increasingly complex problems associated with the insurgents, narcotraffickers, and paramilitary groups, I remain cautiously optimistic that Colombia, with increased U.S. support, can advance the peace process initiated by the Pastrana administration. To succeed at the peace table, the GOC must bargain from a position of strength, buttressed by consistent

success on the battlefield. To this end, Colombia's leaders have undertaken initiatives to make the armed forces equal to the task that lies before them.

Colombia continues to shoot down and force down narcotrafficking aircraft. The Colombian Air Force reports that during the past 18 months it interdicted at least 47 aircraft. The Colombians destroyed 22 on the ground, shot down 4, and captured 21. To increase its capabilities and enhance coordination with and support to the CNP, we are working closely with the Colombian Army to create a Counter Drug (CD) Battalion. This battalion, which is one-third again the strength of a traditional Colombian Army Battalion, is being trained primarily by members of our Seventh Special Forces Group at the Tolemida garrison in southern Colombia. With organic intelligence, reconnaissance, indirect fire, medical and other capabilities, the CD Battalion will become fully operational during December of this year. This unit has been specifically designed to be interoperable with the CNP and to provide the complementary capabilities that are needed to achieve the synergy in CD operations that I have previously described. As the CD Battalion demonstrates its effectiveness, and I am confident it will, I will encourage Colombia's military leaders to expand the concept and create a CD Brigade.

The success and effectiveness of the CD Battalion and the CNP forces it supports will be largely contingent upon the timely

availability of accurate, fused, multi-source intelligence. To ensure that quality intelligence support is available, we have embarked on a concurrent initiative to create a Colombian Joint Intelligence Center (COJIC) that will be co-located with the CD Battalion and Joint Task Force (JTF) South at Tres Esquinas. By reprioritizing tasks, we have identified sufficient Fiscal Year 1999 funds to train, equip, and provide facilities for the COJIC. Training has already commenced and the target date for attainment of initial operational capability is 15 December of this year.

We anticipate that these two initiatives, in combination with a parallel training program designed to expand and refine the operational planning capabilities of JTF South, will bring significant improvements in the performance of Colombian Security Forces against the crucial cocaine cultivation and production areas in Putumayo and Caqueta Departments. As these new organizations demonstrate their effectiveness, I anticipate they will become models for further restructuring and refinement of Colombia's Armed Forces.

OTHER U.S. SUPPORT TO THE CD EFFORT

While the CD Battalion and COJIC are important initiatives that will substantially increase Colombian Security Force capabilities to contend with the growing threat posed by the union of narcotraffickers with insurgents and paramilitaries, they are by no means all inclusive. We are providing assistance in other areas as well. We are enhancing Colombian Air Force

interdiction capabilities by expanding training for pilots at the strategically significant Barranquilla Main Operating Base. Principal focus is on improving Colombian Air Force night interdiction posture through the provision of night vision goggles (NVG), aircraft cockpit NVG compatibility upgrades, and aircrew NVG training. In partnership with Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Department of State, we are attempting to accelerate A-37 service life extension and upgrade initiatives. These initiatives include airframe structural repairs, avionics upgrades, integration of podded radar systems, and creation of a two-year spare parts pipeline. Concurrently, we are striving to help the COLAF achieve sorely needed improvements in battlefield tactical mobility. Important breakthroughs are at hand. Using an existing foreign military sales case, we have assisted the GOC in its efforts to purchase five UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters that are available from Sikorsky for immediate delivery. Concurrently, we are working with the Department of State International Narcotics and Law Enforcement to effect a no-cost lease for 18 UH-1N helicopters recently repurchased from Canada. These aircraft are crucial, as they will provide tactical lift for the new CD Battalion. In response to an urgent request from the Commander of the Colombian Air Force, we have provided and expedited delivery of ordnance items required to replenish inventories depleted during the July FARC offensive.

We have stressed to our Colombian and Peruvian colleagues the need to retain the strategic initiative. Past and present airbridge interdiction operations have caused traffickers to seek alternate routes for movement of precursor chemicals and other materials associated with the production process. Thanks to previous strong support from the Congress, we are aggressively implementing a five-year program designed to create or enhance the capabilities of Peru and Colombia to interdict traffickers on the extensive river networks that traverse primary drug cultivation and production areas. Peru has fielded two of 12 planned Riverine Interdiction Units, and the program is now expanding to Colombia where our goal is to roughly double the capabilities of its already formidable riverine force. A major milestone was achieved last month when President Pastrana personally activated the new Riverine Brigade and its five battalions. Earlier, the Colombian Navy launched its first indigenous support or "mothership."

U. S. Southern Command continues to assist the Colombian Security Forces by providing essential CD training. During this fiscal year, over 30 CD training teams have deployed to Colombia providing training assistance to more than 1500 members of the security forces in such diverse subjects as light infantry training for CD field operations, helicopter familiarization, and riverine craft handling and safety. The command has also provided communications support and facilitated information

sharing by completing the first phase of a theater-wide communications system that links participating nations, through our country teams, to the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) at Key West that now oversees CD operations in both the Source and Transit Zones. As I stated in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, earlier this year, I strongly commend the performance of Colombia's military and national police leadership teams and applaud their aggressive ongoing initiatives to restructure their forces. Additional U.S. assistance to Colombia in the areas of increased detection and monitoring, information sharing, equipment and training are necessary and should be pursued. Increased U.S. support for Colombia's Armed Forces will improve their performance on the battlefield, provide increased GOC leverage at the negotiating table and significantly increase the chances for success of the peace process.

These measures are additive to the attempts to improve and better capitalize on the capabilities of our regional partners in the Source Zone as previously discussed in this statement. However, all of these measures taken singly or in combination are insufficient to address what I consider to be a classic strategy to resources mismatch. There are no villains here. Despite the best efforts of everyone involved, the frequency, pace and tempo of higher priority global military operations have taken a heavy

toll on scarce and crucial assets such as Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms.

CD REQUIREMENTS

U.S. Southern Command lacks the resources to fully accomplish the goals and objectives of the National Drug Control Strategy. While the U.S. military services are tasked to support detection and monitoring requirements with dedicated CD aircraft and ships, out of theater contingencies, higher priority missions, and limited availability of high demand/low density assets result in inconsistent and inadequate support for our requirements.

Our most significant deficiency is in the area of ISR. Lacking adequate ISR, we cannot react quickly and effectively to changes in drug traffickers' operational patterns. U.S. Southern Command's ISR capabilities have been seriously degraded due to the non-availability of required assets. This has significantly reduced the effectiveness of our CD operations. For example, during July of this year, the FARC were able to coordinate a nearly nationwide offensive in the second most populace nation of South America without U.S. intelligence detecting a single concrete indicator of FARC intentions.

To compensate for inadequate resources, we have implemented innovative tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) such as pulse operations in the Caribbean to disrupt the flow of illegal drugs. We have also deployed air assets to support surge CD

operations in Central America and in the Eastern and Western Caribbean. Simultaneously, we have aggressively pursued closer cooperation, more complete coordination, and expanded information exchange with Dutch, British and French forces resident in our AOR. These efforts have paid off in the form of several significant seizures.

A REGIONAL APPROACH TO CD OPERATIONS

U.S. Southern Command's Theater CD priorities are consistent with the National Drug Control Strategy and with interagency guidance. Our number one priority is to support the Government of Colombia in its efforts to destroy the cocaine and heroin industries in that country.

Accordingly, Colombia remains our focus of effort but not at the expense of forging regional and inter-regional approaches to the narcotics trafficking threat. While continuing our support to Colombia, we must sustain support for Peru and Bolivia to ensure they maintain momentum in reducing coca cultivation and drug trafficking. We cannot mortgage the successes we have achieved in these countries or alienate neighboring countries like Brazil, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela with a "Colombia Only" policy.

While I subscribe to the theory that there is no "silver bullet" for the drug problem, the effectiveness and impact of eradication efforts in Peru and Bolivia must not be underestimated. For the second consecutive year, we have

observed significant reductions in coca cultivation, leaf production, and base production in both countries. As a result of forced and voluntary eradication, cultivation is down 26 percent in Peru and 17 percent in Bolivia, while leaf and cocaine production potential has been reduced by roughly 25 percent in both countries.

Though these gains have been partially offset by increases in all categories in Colombia, eradication efforts in Peru and Bolivia convince me that they are making steady and significant inroads into cocaine production at the source. At U.S. Southern Command, we are evaluating other options (equipment and infrastructure development) that will allow us to sustain and even further enhance the progress Peru and Bolivia are making.

The regional riverine training center at Iquitos, Peru, has trained more than 300 personnel from the Peruvian National Police and Coast Guard. Graduates have been assigned to the first of 12 Riverine Interdiction Units (RIUs) or to locally constructed motherships that will support sustained operations by the RIUs. Heretofore, Peru has lacked the capability to interdict narcotraffickers using the extensive network of inland waterways. This initiative will significantly expand Peruvian organic counterdrug capabilities and will provide them urgently needed capabilities to assert control over rivers that have provided traffickers an alternative to the Air Bridge. We have been monitoring Peru closely and view with concern the steady rise of

coca prices since August of last year. The profitability threshold has been crossed, creating the incentive for farmers to turn away from alternative crops and return to illicit coca cultivation. Though preliminary figures indicate that eradication is ahead of last year's pace, we must ensure that Peru continues to receive the U.S. support and assistance it requires to preserve the landmark progress that has been made over the past two years in reducing coca cultivation.

Like Peru, Bolivia has made impressive strides in its counterdrug efforts. Despite periodic resistance, President Banzer has resolutely pursued his "Dignity Plan" and remains steadfast in his commitment to eliminate illegal coca cultivation by the year 2002. Progress to date has been impressive. The forced eradication program undertaken primarily by the armed forces has met or surpassed all established goals. To assist Bolivia in maintaining the momentum that has been established, we must continue to provide adequate support to each of the four pillars of the "Dignity Plan" -- prevention, eradication, interdiction and alternative development.

THEATER ARCHITECTURE

To meet current and future CD responsibilities, U.S. Southern Command must compensate for the loss of U.S. bases in Panama by creating an alternative theater architecture that will support efficient, effective and flexible CD operations into the 21st century.

Puerto Rico has replaced Panama as the focal point of our theater architecture. U.S. Army South recently completed its relocation from Fort Clayton in Panama to Fort Buchanan; Special Operations Command has displaced from its garrison locations in Panama to its new home at Naval Station, Roosevelt Roads; our restructured Navy Component Command, U. S. Navy Forces South, will stand up at Roosevelt Roads later this year, and our intratheater airlift assets and other forward deployed elements of SOUTHAF have migrated from Howard Air Force Base to new locations in Puerto Rico and in Key West. JTF Bravo, augmented with additional helicopter assets from the 228th Aviation Battalion remains at Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras and continues to serve as our primary operating location in Central America.

The loss of Howard Air Force Base has also caused us to revisit our in-theater CD command and control architecture. Panama-based JIATF South which previously functioned as our principal planning and execution oversight activity for CD operations in the Source Zone has been merged with JIATF East in Key West creating a single operational headquarters for the planning and execution of CD operations in both the Source and Transit zones. A similar merger has unified the Southern Regional Operations Center (SOUTHROC) with the Caribbean Regional Operations Center (CARIBROC). Through creative use of information technology, this consolidated organization now gives

us the capability to "see" from the Florida Straits deep into the Source Zone.

The final and, from a counterdrug perspective, most critical element of the new theater architecture are the Forward Operating Locations, or FOLs, that will fill the void created by the loss of Howard Air Force Base. Constrained counterdrug detection, monitoring and tracking missions are currently being conducted from FOLs at Curacao and Aruba in the Netherlands Antilles and Manta, Ecuador. To provide adequate coverage of the expansive Source and Transit Zones, some level of military construction is required at each of these locations to expand their capacities and improve operating and safety conditions. We will also need one additional FOL in Central America to provide increased coverage of heavily used Eastern Pacific transit routes. FOLs are a cost-effective alternative to overseas U.S. bases. They enable us to exploit existing host nation infrastructure to achieve levels of coverage that will equal or exceed that which we enjoyed from Howard Air Force Base at a fraction of the cost when measured over a 10-year period. The Manta FOL is particularly critical as it will give us the operational reach that we need to effectively cover Colombia, Peru and the remainder of the critical southern source zone. A total of \$122.5 million in Air Force military construction (MILCON) funding is needed (\$42.8 million in Fiscal Year 2000 and \$79.7

million in Fiscal Year 2001) to achieve the upgrades and expanded capacities that our CD mission demands.

CONCLUSION

I have now served at U.S. Southern Command for almost 24 months. Shortly after assuming command and making my initial assessment of security conditions in my area of responsibility, I asserted that Colombia was the most threatened nation in the 32 country AOR. Today, even though I continue to stand behind that assessment, I am cautiously optimistic about Colombia's future. My optimism stems from several convictions, two of which I would like to share with the Caucus. First, I have been in and out of Colombia for more than a decade. The leadership team which now guides the country and its security forces is the best I have seen. In Generals Tapias, Mora, Velasco, Serrano and Admiral Garcia the armed forces and the national police are in the hands of top flight professionals. These are senior officers who are both competent and ethical. Their total and undivided allegiance is to Colombia. They know what needs to be done to enable Colombia's security forces to prevail against the narcotraffickers, insurgents and other agents of violence who have wreaked havoc on Colombia's society and its economic well-being. Second, they have set the wheels of military reform in motion and the changes they have implemented have already borne fruit on the battlefield. The outcomes of the country-wide offensive undertaken by the FARC during July merit close

examination. I am convinced that Colombia's security forces emerged with the upper hand. Recent successes can be attributed to improved intelligence preparation of the battlefield; better cooperation between the armed forces and national police; improved air-ground coordination; more effective command and control and competent, aggressive leadership at both tactical and operational levels. As the new Counterdrug Battalion achieves initial operational capability, the Colombian Joint Intelligence Center comes on line, additional helicopters bring about urgently needed improvements in tactical mobility, riverine forces are expanded, and anomalies in the ratio of support to combat forces are corrected, I predict these favorable trends will continue. While I share the widely held opinion that the ultimate solution to Colombia's internal problems lies in negotiations, I am convinced that success on the battlefield and the leverage that it will provide is a precondition for meaningful and productive negotiations. We at U.S. Southern Command are genuinely grateful to the members of the Caucus for your support and interest in our region. We are turning the corner in Colombia. With your continued support and assistance we can and will resolve the two most stressing challenges to the security, stability and prosperity of a region that is rapidly growing in importance to the U.S. -- the national crisis in Colombia and the hemispheric crisis generated by illegal drugs and their corrosive effects on our society and those of our neighbors to the South.

Chairman GRASSLEY. I will start with Mr. Beers, but I have questions of other people, as well. What you have described today, I think my point is to make a point and ask you if what you have described today is supposed to make a difference. Now, as I outlined in the previous chart that was there, we have had a very ambitious eradication program in Colombia against coca, but the result has been the doubling of the coca crop and increases in the productivity so that Colombia will be producing more today than last year or at any time in recent history.

What I think I have heard you say in your statement, it appears that our policy for Colombia is to be more of the same and lots more of it, sort of a more of it squared, than what we have had in the past. Then compare that with the history of increased production we have. Do you describe that as success, and can you tell us why we should have confidence that the plan you have suggested today is going to make a difference?

Mr. BEERS. Thank you, sir. Let me go into some more detail in response to your question. Firstly, with respect to the issue of aerial eradication, the numbers which you have indicated in terms of the overall increase in cultivation of coca in Colombia are our best estimates of that. What they do not reflect is the detailed breakdown of the areas of concentration of our counter-narcotics effort in eradication.

There are, or at least there used to be, three major growing areas of coca in Colombia, the large blob on the right known as Guaviare and the somewhat smaller blob in the south central which actually is the merger of both Caqueta and Putumayo growing areas. The principal area that the United States has supported Colombia in eradicating has been in the Guaviare area, and for the last two years, the overall levels of cultivation in that area have declined.

With respect to the Caqueta area, we have begun a serious effort really only last year, and the increase in the Caqueta area, which is that section there, as opposed to this section here, in that particular area, there was a less dramatic increase than there had been before.

With respect to that southern finger, the Putumayo, that is the area where the increase has been most expansive. That is the area where we expect the increase to be even more dramatic next year because that is the area that there has been no counter-narcotics effort in, and that is the area that we are looking to work with the government of Colombia in order to take on, additional effort in Caqueta, more initial effort in Putumayo.

That is the eradication portion only, and that would be an expansion of the existing effort. But I think that there are two very important additional elements in the strategy that I was describing which are new, which are not extensions of previous activities.

Firstly, the counter-narcotics battalion, which we have all three described to you, is a new initiative on the part of the Colombian military to become more involved in these activities. All of that eradication effort that has occurred heretofore has occurred with minimal or no involvement by the Colombian military on the ground in order to secure the ground during and after an eradication effort in order to sustain that eradication effort. This is a

new proposal on the part of the Colombian government for which they are organizing forces in order to take on this strategy.

Secondly, the Colombian air force, which has had some success up on the north coast with air interdiction, is looking now to move that effort to the south. Why is that different? Because the effort in the north was devoted at going after airplanes that had already acquired finished cocaine and were flying north to deliver that cocaine to drop-off points for further trans-shipment to the United States or Europe.

In the south, what we are looking at is going after the air traffic of the narco-trafficking industry at a point in the process where we are talking about the first and second levels of processing, that is, to prevent the leaf from being sold, to prevent the base and paste from being sold and moved to final processing. If you think about the effort that was undertaken in Peru over the last four or five years and the dramatic drop in the price of coca leaf for farmers which caused the 50 percent decrease in cocaine production in Peru, that is the effort that we are looking to try to do similar work in Colombia. This would represent a new departure on the part of the Colombian government and we are working with them in order to affect that.

We do not believe that any single effort, any single strand, or any single tool in the counter-narcotics effort is, by itself, enough. This is a joint strategy within Colombia. It is a combined strategy with the United States. It is an effort to use as many possible tools as possible in order to go after the trafficking industry, and we think with the broader-gauged and more comprehensive commitment on the part of the Colombian government and our working together with them, that, yes, this does stand an important, significant chance of making the serious inroad in the trafficking industry in Colombia that you and we and the American people all want. Thank you very much, sir.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Do I hear you say, then, assuming that we kind of agree that we have had this dramatic increase in cultivation and production, you are saying that the successes that have been made in south central, and then my saying more of the same, that that will have a parallel accomplishment in other growing areas?

Mr. BEERS. I believe, sir, that increasing some of the things that we are already doing, together with the new programs, is what will make the significant difference here. What we have is a comprehensive program. What we had before was a program that did not have the breadth and vision that this program has, and that is why we are enormously appreciative of the Colombian government's ability to pull together this strategy and present it to us and why we want very much to work with them.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You indicated, Mr. Beers, that two of the principal elements of the Colombian plan are the use of the military in drug eradication and shifting air assets further south so that they would interdict the process before crystallization and not after crystallization, is that correct?

Mr. BEERS. That is correct, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. There is some evidence that one of the contributors to the increased production in Colombia has been the fact that there has been introduced a new strain of coca plant which is more resistant and which also has a higher overall yield of coca hydrochloride. Is that your information, as well?

Mr. BEERS. Yes, sir. We do not have the final figures on the extent of that shift, but it is correct. We have seen evidence and have been reporting it for the last several years, that the higher-yielding variety of coca called *e coca coca*, which is grown in Peru and Bolivia, appears now to have entered into the Colombian cocaine equation, whereas before, they had a much lower-yielding, roughly three-to-one ratio of coca, which was called *ipidu*. So, yes, we are looking at not only the increase in the overall hectorage of coca that is being grown, but we are also looking at the likely increase in the yield characteristics as we measure and translate that cultivation into actual processed cocaine that will probably be available in this coming year, that is, the 1999 estimate, which will be available at the beginning of 2000.

Senator GRAHAM. Since this new strain is a relatively new introduction into Colombia, as you say, and we have already seen almost a doubling of coca production in Colombia, what do we anticipate that this new development in the agronomy of coca production will mean in terms of volume?

Mr. BEERS. Sir, in terms of the tactics of dealing with the drug trafficking issue, this coca is still susceptible to aerial eradication in the same way that the *ipidu* version was. But in addition to that, we are also looking, as I mentioned, about the introduction of ground forces to try to maintain the control on the ground once the eradication has been undertaken and to allow the government then to extend in the form of their control the option of some kind of alternative economic activity to the farmers who are currently drawn into that area by the gold rush mentality created by the high profits that come from the coca industry.

So we hope, in combination, to present them with a clear deterrent for why they will not be able to take that coca to market and with some alternative economic activity so that they can consider other forms of economic work other than growing coca.

Senator GRAHAM. In addition to the focus on eradication and air interdiction, what does the Colombian plan call for in terms of attacking the crystalline labs where the coca paste is converted into cocaine?

Mr. BEERS. The Colombia national police will, with now the support of the military, continue their effort to go after those labs. We have several efforts to see if we cannot identify those labs more effectively by national technical means in addition to the normal human intelligence, which has often been the way that we have discovered where those laboratories are. But we believe that the additional presence of Colombian military along with the police on the ground in the region will help considerably in terms of going after those labs.

If you were to look at the statistics that came out of the effort of Colombian Task Force South, which was located at Tres Esquinas and the operations that were conducted out of that region for the last year, you would see a dramatic increase in the number

of labs that were taken down, and that is a direct result of the increased presence of Colombian military and police on the ground in that region. It becomes a lot more difficult when the sanctuary is no longer a sanctuary to operate with impunity and lawlessness in the way that the traffickers had been able to do before.

In addition to that, as I mentioned and others have mentioned, the Colombian navy and marine corps have stood up an important riverine force that will operate on the rivers in this area, but more broadly, throughout Colombia. One of the major activities that they will be looking at, in addition to the air interdiction effort, will be to prevent the transit of drugs and precursor chemicals over the riverine system in southern Colombia. In addition to that, the Colombian national police and the army will also be looking to dampen the flow of precursor chemicals into this region.

There is one particular chemical, potassium permanganate, which is part of a major interdiction effort on the part of the Colombian government, to prevent its flow into the region, because it is the one essential of all of the precursors that cannot be substituted for.

But in addition to that, the Colombian national police and military have been doing an important job in controlling that flow so that we have discovered, they have discovered, that the traffickers are now, in an effort to find acceptable chemicals, beginning to use cement as a substitute for one of the precursor chemicals in the region, so that General Serrano told us recently that the amount of cement that appears to have been going into the region is actually greater than the amount of cement being used in the city of Bogotá. So they have begun a major effort to now control the flow of the common building material of cement because they are using that as one of the precursors. That is part of a broader effort at precursor control in the region.

Senator GRAHAM. With the increase in production of coca in Colombia, has there been a commensurate increase in the number of crystalline labs?

Mr. BEERS. Sir, I do not have that figure for you, but I will try to get it for you from the intelligence community.

Senator GRAHAM. You indicated that we seem to have increased the number of labs that we have been able to eliminate. Do you have any sense of what percentage those eliminations were of the total of operating labs?

Mr. BEERS. No, sir, I do not, but I will get that for you, also.

Senator GRAHAM. I might say, just in conclusion, it has seemed to me, and I defer to the judgment of people who know a lot more about this business than I do, that the most vulnerable point in the production of cocaine is at the crystalline labs. That is where you have the smallest number of sites which are critical to converting the relatively raw product into a commercially salable product, and that that would be a site that ought to get substantial attention in terms of our effort to break down the chain of operations necessary to produce this product that does so much evil to the people of the world.

Mr. BEERS. Yes, sir, I would agree with you, would that we had perfect knowledge of where all those labs were located, because you are absolutely right. That would be the funnel point that would

allow us the greatest success if we were able to identify where they were located in their entirety. Thank you, sir.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Senator DeWine?

Senator DEWINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Beers, just to kind of complete the picture, can you take Senator Grassley's map and tell me where the DMZ zone is?

Mr. BEERS. Yes, sir. It is located in this area, which touches on the northern part of the Caqueta growing area and the eastern tip of the Guaviare growing area. It is an area about of that size there. It is not centered in any of the major growing areas, but it is on the periphery of each of those growing areas.

Senator DEWINE. And just for the record, the area that you just described and just showed us on the map, what percentage of what Senator Grassley has labeled insurgent controlled area, what percentage of that blue area would that have been, that you described as the DMZ? Is that a fifth of it a fourth of it or what is it?

Mr. BEERS. No, sir. It is much smaller than that.

Senator DEWINE. Much smaller than that?

Mr. BEERS. Yes, sir.

Senator DEWINE. What would you say it is?

Mr. BEERS. We are talking about an area, based on the Senator's blue circumscribed area, that is probably less than ten percent of that area.

Senator DEWINE. Thank you. General Wilhelm, I appreciate your comments about Manta and the need for Manta and I want to maybe zero in a little more on the need, as you perceive it, for Manta and how that directly impacts our overall anti-drug strategy in the region and how it impacts specifically on what we intend to do in Colombia, if you could just go through that in maybe a little bit more detail than you did. You touched on it, and I understand that, but just in sort of layman's terms, what difference does that make as far as what we can do to help Colombia, which is the topic of this hearing?

General WILHELM. Yes, Senator DeWine. First, I think the most helpful way to discuss the forward operating locations is to view them for what they are, which is a network. It is an interdependent network. No one FOL by itself will adequately answer our needs to conduct detection, monitoring, and tracking and aerial reconnaissance missions in support of our counter-drug efforts.

I will start, sir, with Curacao and Aruba and then talk a minute about Central America and then close on Manta, which is the most important FOL location, in my judgment, given the drug threat that we face now.

First, Curacao and Aruba. Located where they are, adjacent to Venezuela, those two locations provide us excellent coverage of what I call the southern transit zone, the southern Caribbean region, and the northern source zone, Venezuela and northern Colombia.

Then we have identified a need for an FOL in Central America. I will cover this very briefly. I think our needs could be met from any of a variety of locations. My preferred site is the Liberia air field in Costa Rica, but there is a bilateral counter-drug and maritime agreement that needs to be concluded before we can logically open this next negotiating segment with Costa Rica.

But whatever FOL we end up selecting and negotiating in Central America, it will provide coverage of Central America, a large portion of the important eastern Pacific transit routes, which we have not been covering adequately in recent years, and it will also provide us overlapping coverage of a small portion of the northern source zone, again, looking at the Colombia-Venezuela portion, which brings us to Manta.

Manta provides us immediate access to the very important Peru-Colombia-Ecuador border region where the cocaine hydrochloride, the base is moved to laboratories for refinement. It is a major movement vector for precursor chemicals. From Manta and only from Manta can we get what I call coverage of the deep source zone, which is the rest of the world. I think we would be ill advised to pursue a Colombia-only strategy.

We need to pay careful attention to the successes that we have had in Peru and Bolivia and we need to sustain those successes. I know that the caucus knows the numbers. Last year, Peru reduced its production by 26 percent, Bolivia by 17 percent in terms of leaf, and in terms of base, about 25 percent in both countries. So we need to sustain our progress there. From Manta and only from Manta can we reach down and cover the deep southern portion of the source zone.

If you look at all of that in the aggregate, sir, at the end of the day, from this network of FOLs, we will have far better and more efficient coverage of the entire area of interest from a counter-narcotics standpoint than we ever had from Howard Air Force Base and at a considerable savings. The annual cost of operating Howard Air Force Base in its last full year of operations was \$75.8 million. It will take us \$122.5 million to develop the FOLs, as I mentioned earlier, to expand their capacities, to improve their operating and safety conditions to the point that we can conduct operations in the frequency and intensity that we need to, \$122.5 million over two years, a one-time cost. Thereafter, our annual operating costs, we estimate between about \$14 and \$18 million a year.

So when the structure is in place, over a ten-year span, and I suspect we are looking at about a ten-year struggle here, the FOLs would support our efforts at about 40 percent of the straight-line costs that we would have incurred operating Howard Air Force Base as a permanent facility.

So, sir, as a network of operating locations, a brief look at some of the fiscal implications of what we are talking about, and, of course, we do escape the sovereignty issues because these remain host nation facilities and bases to which we simply have access authorization.

Senator DEWINE. General, how long would it take to get Manta up?

General WILHELM. Sir, we believe that we can do most of the heavy hauling—to put it in very simple terms, we need to dump about \$30 million worth of concrete into that runway to make it capable of taking our big airplanes. Big airplanes to us are AWACs and tankers. Those are the long-reach, long-look airplanes that we need to do the job in the deep-source zone.

Senator DEWINE. It would take how long?

General WILHELM. Sir, we can let those contracts and get most of that done during fiscal year 2000.

Senator DEWINE. What assurance do we have we get to stay there?

General WILHELM. I talked with Ambassador Rich Brown about 48 hours ago, sir. We have one final point on taxes to resolve with the Ecuadorians and it looks as though we will either have a ten-year agreement or a five-year agreement with a five-year provision for automatic extension.

Senator DEWINE. Thank you. Secretary Beers, is there any reason for any optimism in regard to the peace process?

Mr. BEERS. Sir, I—

Senator DEWINE. Is there any good news?

Mr. BEERS. I think that one of the important ways to look at this is that this is not a short-term process and that time horizons that are shorter than three or five years are unrealistic with respect to the resolution. I am not aware of a negotiation with an insurgent that took less time than that. I think there were enormous expectations that were created when President Pastrana was elected. I think we are in for the long, slow haul.

So when you ask, am I optimistic, if you give me the privilege of saying, with a longer time horizon, yes, and I think that this strategy that the Colombian government has presented represents a way to push the parties closer together to resolving it, but it is not going to happen quickly.

Senator DEWINE. My time is up. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you very much. This is a very troubling thing for me. I got involved as a young Federal prosecutor prosecuting cocaine cases in the DEA and others in the 1970s, and 12 years as United States Attorney on the Gulf Coast and had some appreciation for what was happening. I read *The Underground Empire* and all those books and all that stuff. The things that you are saying today, Mr. Beers, Mr. Sheridan, were said in this body 15 or 20 years ago. We are making progress. We are going to do this. We have got a little progress in Peru, 26 percent, 17 percent in Bolivia, reduction. But there is an increase in Colombia that more than compensates for that and that has been the pattern consistently.

Now, I am not sure how to deal with it, but I think we have got to be honest about what is happening, and we are not going to stop the drug problem in the United States by reducing or stopping production in Colombia. That is not going to do it. It is a component of it, if we can make progress, but it is not going to deal with our problem. We have a demand that it will be produced somewhere.

Mr. Sheridan, how much cocaine is consumed in the United States in metric tons per year?

Mr. SHERIDAN. I would have to defer to General McCaffrey on that. My sense is it is probably 300 or 400 tons a year.

Senator SESSIONS. Is that including what is seized or actually consumed.

Mr. SHERIDAN. No. You said consumed in the United States.

Senator SESSIONS. Do you mean actually coming in, or including that that is seized——

Mr. SHERIDAN. I can only give you rough orders of magnitude. The best I can recall, the number is about 400 tons or so, I think, enter the United States, give or take some, and maybe 100 tons are then seized somewhere in the United States, and maybe 300 tons are consumed, somewhere along those lines.

Senator SESSIONS. So it looks like Colombia will supply the biggest part of that next year, with 250 metric tons.

Mr. SHERIDAN. Correct.

Mr. BEERS. There is more than enough.

Senator SESSIONS. It is a very, very frustrating process for me. And you have Colombia producing what percentage of our heroin now?

Mr. SHERIDAN. I do not know, but it is a growing percentage.

Senator SESSIONS. Is it not 60 or so percent, I believe, in one of the——

Mr. SHERIDAN. Well, 60 or 70 percent is of the heroin that is actually seized, although I think people would be careful to say it does not necessarily reflect what is being consumed. In other words, our law enforcement may have a bias towards being more effective in seizing Colombian heroin than perhaps some out of Southeast Asia or other places. But, clearly, increasing amounts of Colombian heroin are being found in the United States.

Senator SESSIONS. Mr. Sheridan, you said that the DEA is not in the counter-insurgency business, and I believe, General Wilhelm, you said our military support had been “exclusively on counter-narcotics assistance.”

General WILHELM. That is correct. Yes, sir.

Senator SESSIONS. It seems to me, if we are going to lobby Colombia to do something about producing cocaine, they need to be able to do it, and it seems to me they have got to take control of their country. I mean, Abraham Lincoln understood that. You cannot have a big chunk of your country under Marxist revolutionary control and be able to expect the country to be able to do anything successfully, particularly when they are involved in the narcotics business. That troubles me.

Is this the policy of the United States, Mr. Beers, and the State Department, that we are not going to assist Colombia in defeating the guerilla forces that are threatening its ability to do what we ask in their own democracy?

Mr. BEERS. Sir, what we are about and what our focus is is on counter-narcotics, but that——

Senator SESSIONS. My question to you is——

Mr. BEERS. Please, may I finish, sir?

Senator SESSIONS. My time is going to run out.

Mr. BEERS. But that area is also insurgent. Where the insurgents and the traffickers are together, our assistance supports efforts to go after insurgents as well as traffickers because there is no difference between insurgents operating in those areas. So we will assist in that area.

The strategy, then, is to deprive the insurgents of their resources. There are insurgents there. There are resources there.

This is an effort to go after the traffickers and the insurgents where there is cultivation——

Senator SESSIONS. Do you agree with the General that Colombia is not going to have any leverage at the negotiating table until they start winning militarily some on the battlefield?

Mr. BEERS. That is the general view of this government, sir.

Senator SESSIONS. And does this government have any plans to assist a longtime ally of the United States, Colombia, in this effort, to defeat the military insurgents that are in Colombia?

Mr. BEERS. As I have said, our authorization and our strategy is counter-narcotics. It will also effectively reduce the capabilities of the insurgents. It is their life blood.

Senator SESSIONS. I just think that is a real bad problem. I think that my best judgment is that the first thing we need to do is help Colombia win this civil war to reassert governmental control over their country and then they can begin to make progress, and it seems to me it is sort of ironic that the area that the insurgents control is the very area where the major cultivation is, is that not true, Mr. Sheridan?

Mr. SHERIDAN. Yes, and as Secretary Beers said, our interests, our policy is very clear of supporting the Colombian military, allowing it to operate in the narcotics areas, particularly in the Putumayo and the Caqueta. In the course of them doing counter-narcotics work, they will end up denying the FARC the revenue that the FARC need to engage in their insurgency.

Senator SESSIONS. I understand the DEA's position. As a matter of fact, I think DEA is correct. DEA is not a political-military organization. It is an anti-drug organization. You have to maintain that as your priority. But I am surprised and concerned that the policy of our military and our State Department and our President is not to provide direct assistance, where possible, to help Colombia defeat the Marxist guerrillas that are threatening their——

Mr. BEERS. Sir, this is their highest priority.

Mr. SHERIDAN. Senator, also, I am speaking for the Department of Defense.

Senator SESSIONS. Excuse me.

Mr. SHERIDAN. I am speaking for Secretary Cohen today and I can tell you, I have gotten very clear guidance from him. I know where he is.

Senator SESSIONS. Enforcement policy, not DEA. I am sorry.

Mr. SHERIDAN. Right. He is strongly in favor of supporting the Colombian military as it works in the counter-narcotics area. We are not interested in a straight counter-insurgency support program in Colombia, nor do we have any authorization or appropriation of any funds from this Congress for that purpose.

Senator SESSIONS. But is that the right policy? Who wants to answer that? Is that the right policy?

Mr. BEERS. Sir, that is the Colombians' policy.

General WILHELM. This is, as much as anything else, an operational question. Senator Sessions, that is a good question and I think there is a reasonable answer to it. I have never seen an insurgency quite like the one that we are observing in Colombia right now. It is the only self-sustaining insurgency I have ever seen. There is no Cuba in back of it. There is no Soviet Union in back

of it. It is this delicate marriage of criminals, narcotraffickers, with insurgents. So it is kind of a one-of-a-kind phenomenon.

I have always felt that one of the best ways to defeat an enemy is not to take him on frontally, because you are going to take a heck of a lot of casualties to do that. A much better way is to cut his supply lines. The FARC's supply line are the revenues that they get from the narcotraffickers, so if we can help them defeat the narcotraffickers, dry up their cash flow, which is exactly the commodity they use for recruitment, for arms purchases, for the adaptive tactics and techniques they have undertaken with the propane canisters, the full range of activities they are involved in, I think the insurgency will die on the vine. To me, this is a good military strategy. Cut off their logistics lifeline and let the force die on the vine.

Senator SESSIONS. General Wilhelm, all I would say to you is, we have been trying to dry up the money going into Colombia from cocaine for over 20 years. That has been a goal not achieved under any administration, and I am not sure you can achieve that. I am not sure that we are going to be able to do anything until they are defeated on the battlefield. But I guess you have been there, you know, but those are just my instincts about where we are. I do hope that we will not be so persnickety about not providing aid that will help them actually win militarily, and that would help fight narcotics, I believe.

Mr. Chairman, I am sorry. My time is over.

Chairman GRASSLEY. General Wilhelm, one of our main concerns has to be for effective intelligence. General, could you characterize your current situation as far as intelligence collection is concerned and the resources necessary for that and how your resources meet the needs?

General WILHELM. Senator Grassley, I am in trouble. In December of last year, I categorized our intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities in Southern Command at the lowest measured readiness level, C-4. That is where we are today. Just to make our plight perhaps a little bit more measurable, we requested slightly in excess of 900 aerial sorties to paint the intelligence picture that we needed of these narcotics producing regions. Our fill was less than 400 sorties, or at about a 44 percent fill rate.

I need help. I need it badly. I have no tactical assets that are dedicated to my theater. The ARL, the airborne reconnaissance low, an aircraft, of course, which we tragically lost here about a month ago with a crew of five U.S. and two Colombians on board, was designed and built for United States Southern Command. I do not have a single one of them today, but three of them are in Korea.

I am in urgent need of help on the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance side. I think we are on the cusp of elevating Colombia to Tier 1 Bravo for intelligence collection, which will certainly increase our leverage to get assets. But at this moment, that is probably the largest single problem that I face, sir, always backwiring into the theater architecture. That is why it is so important that the few assets that I have be at the right locations, where they can give me the densest possible coverage of the most

important areas. Hence, I keep bringing up the FOL structure and the importance of Manta.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Secretary Sheridan, you have outlined a number of different projects that you currently have ongoing in Colombia and several of these were funded through Section 1033 of the DoD appropriation bill. Are there any legislative recommendations that you would make to Congress that would allow your current projects in Colombia to be conducted more effectively?

Mr. SHERIDAN. For the moment, Senator, I think we are fine. Clearly, the 1033 authority which allows us to buy and transfer equipment, something that in the past the Congress had not been willing to provide for us, has been a help. It has a cap in any one particular year of \$20 million. We are bumping up against that cap. I think for the moment, we are okay, but as we come around perhaps with next year's authorization bill, at that point, we may come and ask for that cap to be raised from \$20 million to some higher number. But for the moment, I think we have the authority from Congress to do the things that we are being asked to do.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Would you suggest how raising the cap, if you asked for that to be done, would affect your current policy options?

Mr. SHERIDAN. It would not. It would allow us, though, to provide more equipment to those riverine forces, which is what the authority was intended to do.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Then my last question would be to Secretary Beers. I do not know whether it is a point or a question, but I would ask you to respond either way. You have suggested an ongoing policy review. I do not have any argument with that.

But I guess I would have argument with that if it does not go beyond policy review, because it seems to me that we have to do better than just policy review. If this is a review, can we expect to see a policy come out of it? Will we be seeing that before we see a wish list of things that we would do if we appropriate money? It is already going on in the administration, talk about requesting a supplemental for Colombia, so would we see something more than just a project list or a grab bag of goods and services that it would be used for? I said in my opening comment, it seems to me very important that we have a policy before we go ahead and make these decisions to spend more money.

Mr. BEERS. Yes, sir. We have been engaging in this review and the discussions with the Colombian government for the express purpose of having a policy before we came to resource decisions. There were some indications of discussions of numbers, in part derivative of the Colombian visit up here in July with a list of equipment that they were interested in and some indications with respect to the Republican Drug Caucus in the House and with respect to General McCaffrey's documents that were circulated.

But I can tell you, having participated in the deliberations within the administration, that the focus has been since mid-July on the development of a clear, comprehensive strategy for presentation and discussion with the Congress of the United States and that that was the intent of the President's response to the Speaker and the Majority Leader and that is the intent of the administration, to present you all with a policy proposal, folding in the Colombian

strategy, which has got to be the centerpiece of that. We are not doing this by ourselves. We are not doing this alone. Then, if that yields issues or implications that have resources, then we will look at that in association with the Congress, as is appropriate.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Thank you. I will call on Senator Graham. I, and maybe other members, I, for sure, will have some questions that I want to submit for answer in writing, but I do not want to prolong this meeting longer than necessary. Senator Graham?

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I will heed your advice and may also submit some questions in writing.

Let me pursue three issues. One, General Wilhelm, relative to intelligence and surveillance capabilities, in April, I talked to another one of your Central Command brethren who expressed similar concern about intelligence surveillance, but he thought that it was episodic, that it was a function of the war in the Balkans and that there had been a diversion of resources for that purpose. Is your situation an episode or is this a systemic problem of adequate intelligence surveillance?

General WILHELM. Senator Graham, it is a little bit of both, but I think at Southern Command, it leans a little bit more toward the systemic side. We have seen a steady draw-down of the resources that are available to this theater and it is not only the airborne platforms that everybody competes for. We had an intelligence brigade, the 470th, the military intelligence brigade that was active in our theater that has been stood down. A lot of our ground signals intelligence sites have been closed. So it is not just airborne platforms.

Also, the counter-drug mission, as I know this caucus is well aware, the global military forces policy is broken down into four increments and counter-drug is number four of four. So three other things get filled before ours, and so we suffer the kinds of losses that General Zeni talked to you about when Bosnia and Kosovo heat up and they draw off these low-density, high-demand assets that all the CINCs need. So ours is partly a function of world events and partly systemic.

Senator GRAHAM. In the budget request that General McCaffrey has presented us, does he adequately address the issue of intelligence resources for this anti-drug campaign?

General WILHELM. Senator Graham, I have got to be honest with you. I will have to go back and take another look at the resource outlines that General McCaffrey provided. If I could take that for the record, I would like to review that again. I know roughly where the money is, but I will need to take a look at that, if you do not mind, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Fine. Mr. Beers, in the Colombian plan that has just been presented, what does it do in terms of internal reform of the Colombian institutions, the military and the police, which will carry the bulk of the responsibility? As an example, there has been concern that there is a policy in Colombia that if you are a high school graduate, you cannot be used in combat, and that has substantially reduced the number of potential combatants within the Colombian military. Does the plan that has recently been submitted deal with that or other institutional reforms?

Mr. BEERS. Let me let Mr. Sheridan answer the military portion but take the opportunity to also expand a little bit on the judicial side. The plan discusses both. On the judicial side, there is a major reform effort that is partially underway that would be accelerated as a result of this plan which would go after dealing with some general problems with the Colombian judicial system as they transition from the Napoleonic code to something more like the English system with oral testimony.

In addition to that, there is a major anti-corruption effort that they are planning on undertaking and a general policy to deal with human rights abuses across the board, as well as efforts to go after assets of traffickers and put them back into the public treasury, as well as efforts to disrupt and dismantle the trafficking organizations. This is a major component of their plan and I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to stress that important element.

Brian.

Mr. SHERIDAN. On the military reform side, as I said in my opening comments, former Minister Ureda and then current Minister Ramirez and General Tapias have shown us a willingness and a recognition of the need to reform the Colombian armed forces, which for us is very refreshing and, we think, needed. They have already taken some steps. In our recent discussions with them on the development of their strategy, they have committed themselves to taking more. I would anticipate over the next few months we will work with them in helping them develop further ideas for their restructuring and reform.

As I also said earlier, the Colombian military has made dramatic progress on human rights. In fact, very recently, we just had several senior military officials cashiered on human rights grounds. So General Tapias gets it. The leadership gets it. Reported human rights violations which are attributed to the military by NGOs have plummeted over the last few years. They just passed a military judicial reform bill in their congress this past summer. So we are seeing real progress in those areas and we are seeing progress in their willingness to restructure their military to make them more effective.

I think General Wilhelm can comment on the bachalarias, which is what you referred to.

General WILHELM. Yes, Senator, and I think this may get somewhat to some of the points that Senator Sessions was referring to as Colombia reaches out and strives to regain control of its own territory.

Colombia has got a big army, about 122,000. They have got a big national police force, about 104,000. I go along with Senator DeWine's assessment of the overall strength of the insurgents, about 20,000. So they have the ten-to-one ratio that we commonly refer to that you need to defeat an insurgent force, but you need the right army to do that.

Your point on the bachalarias, Senator Graham, is spot on. As best I can determine, though, the number is a little bit imprecise. Somewhere between 30,000 and 35,000 members of that 122,000-man army, by virtue of their education level, were, by law, exempted from combat operations. That is the wrong kind of army.

As Brian mentioned, during his tenure, Minister of Defense Rodrigo Ureda, before he stood down, developed a personal goal of really taking a tight comb to the structure of the armed forces and his goal was to move 15,000 troops per year out of these non-productive capacities, this distorted tooth-to-tail ratio, and put them out in the interior where they were needed to wrest control of the countryside from the insurgents. He viewed that as a three-year proposition, which, if carried through, obviously, to completion, would put 45,000 more troops with their fingers on triggers instead of their feet on overpasses.

So this is very, very much a part of the reform and restructuring efforts that are underway in Colombia right now, and Minister Ureda's vision has been adopted by Minister Ramirez, the new Minister of Defense.

Senator GRAHAM. My time is up, but I will submit a written question which will basically ask what does the United States military, after its long association with the Colombian military, consider to be the most urgent reforms for the Colombian military to reach the level of efficiency to be able to carry out the mission that it has committed to? Second, to what degree does the plan that was submitted this week meet those diagnosed needs? And third, is there any U.S. role in seeing that those prescriptions are effectively applied?

Chairman GRASSLEY. Thank you, Senator Graham.

Senator DeWine.

Senator DEWINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, you make, I think, a very compelling and very good point, a very interesting point, when you talk about SOUTHCOM's intelligence assets, that they have been depleted to support ongoing missions in other parts of the world. It seems to me, and this is a comment and you can comment on it if you would like, or if you want to pass, that is fine, it seems to me that this is the world we live in today and that we face a lack of depth in regard to these assets.

Maybe as we look at where we go into the next century, we need to be beefing these assets up, because it seems to me they are always going to be needed somewhere in the world. There is going to be some crisis or someplace where they are needed, and if we are serious about having any of these assets available or significant assets available or enough assets available for anti-drug efforts, that we probably need to add to the depth of these and we need to look at this from a long-term point of view. Do you want to comment on that or not?

General WILHELM. Senator, I think if—well, I will be bold enough to speak, because I talk with them all the time, with a number of my fellow CINCs. I think they all feel the pinch of these assets that we call low-density, high-demand, and we would like to see the pool of resources deepened.

The examples are many. One of the examples that comes to mind that is not part and parcel of my normal theater business is the aged EA-6B, our sole remaining electronic combat aircraft, which really needs to precede every tactical strike force, and that is a hard-pressed asset.

We look at Rivet Joint. I have Senior Scout, the aircraft that really paint the battlefield picture for us. These are assets that I

think we all have a compelling need for and they do not necessarily always correlate precisely to what we need to fight a major regional contingency. It is the rest of the world that we have to address, developing regions, places where we are performing some of these less traditional missions.

So, yes, sir, I think we are probably all in agreement on that, and I believe that there are some fairly purposeful steps underway to try to deepen the asset pool so that we can better meet the CINCs' requirements for these assets.

Senator DEWINE. Let me address a question to any of the members of the panel who would like to respond to it. Some of you have already touched upon this, but I want to talk a little bit about the regional threat that this ongoing crisis in Colombia poses. The FARC constantly infiltrates the Darien Province, for example, in Panama. It just goes on and on and on. They may be responsible for recent kidnappings inside Ecuador. Another example, the head of the Colombian paramilitaries has threatened Panama and Venezuela.

How would you describe for the American people the significance of what is going on in Colombia, besides the drug problem and its impact on the United States and besides its impact on Colombia? What is its impact on the region, potentially?

Mr. BEERS. I will take a start, but I think that all my colleagues are probably going to want to contribute to that question. Sir, I think you have painted an accurate picture of the concerns that we all share, which is that, without making too big an issue about how this might expand, you have painted three adjacent countries who currently are experiencing some dislocations or problems that stem directly from the uncertainty and instability that is occurring in certain areas in Colombia. That is part of the reason the government wants to do something about it, and from our own national security perspective, with respect to drug trafficking and democratic stability in the region, why we would like to do something about it.

It is an issue that requires focus and discipline in terms of how we think about the problem and how we approach it and the kinds of resources and strategies that we put against it. We do not have any magic solutions, but it is pretty clear to all of us that we are going to have to deal with these problems in the adjacent areas just as much as we are going to have to deal with the problems that directly affect us in Colombia.

Mr. SHERIDAN. I would just say, Senator, that trying to characterize the regional impact in some ways is similar to trying to characterize the internal situation, where the difficulty for people working the problem is in trying to strike the right balance and understanding what is going on, because it is very complicated.

On the one hand, I think there is a recognition—the FARC have been around since 1966. There has been a recent spate of press coverage. I think some people pick up the newspaper and they say, my God, what is going on in Colombia today? It is going to fall apart tomorrow. That is one extreme. But the other extreme, I think equally dangerous, is for the long-time Colombia watchers who say, do not worry about it. This has been going on for so long.

We are kind of trying to understand and look at the situation and understand what is the degree of the slope here. From my perspective, when you talk to the intelligence people and look at the longer-term trends, what you see is that the FARC today is bigger than it has ever been. It operates in more provinces than it has ever operated in before. It conducts more complicated military operations than it has ever conducted before. But then there is the day-in/day-out tactical victories and tactical defeats.

So from my perspective, Bogota is not threatened tomorrow, but on the other hand, there is clearly something going on with the growing capabilities of the FARC. When you look at it regionally, the FARC have been using the Darien Province as an R&R location for years and years. I remember when I first came to this job about 6½ years ago, in one day, the FARC wiped out a whole Ecuadorian riverine unit. So they have been using northern Ecuador and have been familiar with that for quite a while.

So, again, it is trying to understand what is new here and what has been going on for quite a while, but I would say, as the situation in Colombia goes, so will go the regional threat, and clearly, I think, the neighboring countries, it is appropriate for them to focus on their border areas. Virtually all of them are very inaccessible jungle areas, extremely hard for those governments to get at, and in many cases, there is not a whole lot going on out there except for jungles and guerrillas.

Senator DEWINE. General.

General WILHELM. Sir, as you would appreciate, I spend a lot of time with the militaries from the five nations that do border Colombia and it has been very interesting over the last 24 months. When I go to Caracas, Venezuela, right now, the topic of greatest interest is Colombia. Ditto, Brazil. I was in Brasilia about two weeks ago.

I refer to it as a spreading stain. I think the sensitivity of the surrounding countries to the situation in Colombia has changed. It has intensified. Just sort of anecdotally, looking very, very quickly at what is happening in the region on any given day, Venezuela will have about 10,000 troops along the Putumayo River, which establishes its border with Colombia. It is very interesting. I have visited most of the outposts. About 80 percent of the people living on the Venezuelan side of the river are Colombians, so it is a displaced population.

Peru and Ecuador for a considerable period of time were really denied much of an opportunity to do much about the situation on their border because they were fixated on each other. With the signing of the peace accords in Brasilia in October of last year, both countries are now concentrating their military forces near the border to limit incursions there.

Brazil is very important. For a long time, I think Brazil was essentially in kind of a denial mode. That is certainly not what I see at all in Brasilia now. A laboratory was destroyed on the Brazilian side of the border, which I believe had an annual output capacity of about ten metric tons. That is big drug business. Brazil is investing \$1.4 billion in the Amazon surveillance system so that they can get a series of both airborne, ground, fixed, and mobile radars and

sensors to better control and surveil the Amazonis Province, which is very important to them.

Brian did a good job of describing the situation in the Darien Province of southern Panama. Panama, of course, with no military after Just Cause, really is left with public forces which are not configured to deal with the kind of threats that the violations of sovereignty posed by the FARC present to them.

So it affects each and every one of the surrounding nations to some extent in varying and differing ways, but the concern level, I will tell you, sir, is up significantly.

Senator DEWINE. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did notice in the recent New York Times article that despite their early hopes for Pastrana, however, U.S. officials generally described his efforts to negotiate with the guerrillas as a failure that has left the insurgents stronger and more defined. Without going into too much detail, I think you have agreed that the insurgents are stronger and this negotiation may not have been helpful.

General Wilhelm, is it not true, when you are asking an infantry company to get out and put their life on the line to confront a military force, that they need to know that the leadership is committed to victory and that it can undermine the effectiveness of any unit if the leadership at the top is not perceived as committed?

General WILHELM. Senator Sessions, you could not be more correct. We have events in the last 30 years in our own history, I think, that bear that out completely. You have just expressed a sentiment that, quite frankly, was alive and well in Colombia fairly recently.

I can remember very, very well talking to an old friend shortly after I took command of Southern Command, a general—name is not important—in the Colombian armed forces, and he said, do you know what our problem is? And I said, what is that? He said, the army is at war and the country is not.

I think a lot of that is changing, sir, and I think a lot of it is changing because of the activities of the FARC. It is hard to ignore the kidnapping of an entire church congregation in Cali. It is hard to ignore the hijacking of an Avianca airliner. It is hard to ignore the kidnapping of three U.S. nationals and then transporting them across a river and shooting them in the back of the head.

I think the reality of this struggle is settling in on the Colombian population at large and I detect a spirit in the armed forces that this is a shared enterprise. They believe that the president is with them. I think they believe that the national leadership is with them.

So I have seen some changes over the last 24 months, sir, and maybe they will not produce results tomorrow, but looking to the longer term, I think they probably will. I think we will see a mobilization of national will, but I think the mobilization of national will will also be tied to an increase in national confidence. That is why I drew some optimism from the performance of the military during the July offensive and I hope they can sustain that kind of performance.

Senator SESSIONS. I recall one time that Henry Kissinger said that nothing clears the mind so well as the absence of alternatives, and I just do not see how Colombia has an alternative. They have got to get themselves together and they have got to put forth a military force that is effective and do something about the drugs in the process. While I would tend to agree that it would be very damaging to the narco-rebels if we could reduce their money, historically, I am not sure that is going to be happening. I think it is going to be almost together, the military and anti-narcotics, to defeat them.

It would seem to me difficult, as you have described this group more as outlaws, extortionists, not your traditional groups, it would be even harder to negotiate with a group like that, to justify negotiating with a group like that. If you were dealing with a group of ethnic people who wanted more autonomy for their region, that is one thing. But if we are dealing with nothing more than people with a Marxist history and a narcotics agenda, it seems to me even more difficult.

So I would encourage the people of Colombia to come together effectively and do that. Can we help without becoming involved, General Wilhelm? Can we help, effectively, their military to strengthen itself?

General WILHELM. Senator Sessions, I think we can, and honestly, sir, I think we are. Right today in Tolomida, Colombia, there are 621 troops in training right now. This is the last increment of this counter-drug battalion that we started building last April. We trained 317 troops in the first increment, 621 now. So this is a battalion that is a third again the size of the traditional Colombian army battalion.

It has got organic indirect fire capabilities, organic reconnaissance, it has got an organic medical capability, it has got civil affairs capability, psychological operations capability. In simple terms, it is a full-up round. It has been designed from the ground floor to work effectively with the Colombian national police and we are helping with this unit, sir, because it is focused on the counter-drug mission.

The Colombian army is not sitting on its hands. They have other organizations, counter-insurgency or counter-guerilla battalions, which they have trained on their own hook.

My thought, and I think I am correct, is that once the Colombian military leadership has the opportunity to observe this first CD battalion in operation—and sir, they have already told me, next year, we want to expand this to a CD brigade—I think we are going to have helped them create the prototype around which they will redesign the rest of their armed forces. Again, the dedicated counter-insurgency force, internal problem to Colombia, is theirs to contend with. We are providing the training, equipment, and monetary support to build the CD battalion. But I think a lot of what we are doing is going to find transference to the rest of the force.

Senator SESSIONS. Mr. Beers, I have only been in this body a little over two-and-a-half years, so I do not pretend to understand the ways of all our government, particularly the State Department, but is there some line here we are talking about? If we assist the mili-

tary beyond just counter-narcotics, is that some sort of line we have crossed that makes us nervous?

Mr. BEERS. Sir, with respect to the authorities of the bureau that I am in charge of, we have authorities that are counter-narcotics and that is what I do and I do not do counter-insurgency. But the Department as a whole has come to this conclusion. That is an internal issue for the government of Colombia. We will help them on the counter-narcotics side, including where it extends to the FARC who are acting as narcotraffickers. But, yes, sir, as a policy perspective, we are not of the view that we should involve ourselves directly in the insurgency. So it is a policy decision.

Senator SESSIONS. I certainly do not want to have American troops in Colombia now fighting a war, but I think, to me, counter-narcotics and counter-guerilla is one in the same and if we can provide, sell, supply the kind of hardware or training that they need that could help them win this war, we would all be better off. It is troubling, and I think there is uniform agreement—you can tell it from the nations around Colombia—we are worried right now. Things may not be falling apart in a total disaster. It is not a time to panic, but it is time to be concerned. Ultimately, I believe this matter will be decided on the battlefield. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman GRASSLEY. I hope we can look back at this period of time and Congressional and administrative deliberation of this issue as it relates to Colombia and the President Pastrana's coming to this country as a point in time when some policy changes and efforts on our part have pointed to a dramatic change in the situation in Colombia and the export of cocaine and other illegal drugs to our country.

Before I dismiss you, I would like to make a point, Mr. Beers and Mr. Sheridan. As you are aware, and I did give a speech on this on the floor of the Senate a few weeks ago, I have repeatedly asked the administration for a detailed plan about the helicopters that are in Mexico. The whole helicopter issue in Mexico has been a great embarrassment and the lack of a plan seems to deepen that embarrassment. I am going to ask one last time, and not ask you to comment now but just to get a plan up here on how these helicopters are to be used, and I hope that we could have that within a couple of weeks.

In regard to this hearing, this has been a very worthwhile discussion with you three leaders in this area. We thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to be here with us and to follow up with us on the questions that this panel will submit in writing. As I have indicated, I hope that the things that have been expressed here by all of you, both what is hoped for in the future as well as what you see developing now, makes a significant difference and a follow-through will help with that. Thank you all very much.

Mr. BEERS. Thank you.

Mr. SHERIDAN. Thank you.

General WILHELM. Thank you.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Our next panel and last panel consists of Bernard Aronson and Michael Shifter.

Mr. Aronson is Chairman of ACON Investments and New Bridge Andean Partners here in Washington. He was Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs from 1989 to 1993 and was the principal coordinator of U.S. foreign policy and the principal foreign policy advisor to the President and Secretary of State on relations with Latin America and the Caribbean Basin.

Michael Shifter is currently a senior fellow for the Inter-American Dialogue here in Washington. There, he develops and implements strategies in the area of democratic development and human rights. He served previously as Director of Latin American and Caribbean Programs at the National Endowment for Democracy and the Ford Foundation's Governance and Human Rights Program in South America.

I thank you both for being present for this meeting and discussion and for your contribution in advance. I will start with you, Mr. Aronson.

STATEMENT OF BERNARD ARONSON, CHAIRMAN, ACON INVESTMENTS, AND FORMER ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

Mr. ARONSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In the interest of time, I will submit my statement for the record and try to summarize it.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and Senator Graham and other members of the caucus for inviting us, but more importantly, for holding this hearing. We usually get in trouble in Latin America because we fail to pay attention to problems there until they become crises and then we seek to do something about it, and usually the policy choices we face are narrow and difficult. So I think this hearing is very timely and I think, to some extent, we have done that with regard to Colombia as a country, both the administration and Congress, but it is not too late, so it is important that we pay attention.

I guess the only other point I would make, and this is sort of an old mantra with me, is that I would make an appeal to you and your colleagues to try to maintain what this hearing has shown, which is a bipartisan approach to this policy, because when an issue in Latin America becomes polarized along partisan lines, we just undermine the effectiveness of the United States. We should have learned that lesson in Central America. When we came together in 1989 around a bipartisan policy, we were able to end the war in El Salvador, to democratize Nicaragua, set the stage for a peace process in Guatemala.

Your focus in the narcotics threat, but I think, as has been evident in this discussion, you cannot separate the issue of counter-narcotics from the issue of the war and the larger crisis in Colombia, and that crisis involves many, many issues. It involves corruption. It involves vast areas of the Colombian state in which the government has no presence. It involves civil insurgencies whose roots go far beyond the drug trade and have deep social and political background that we need to understand.

I guess one point I would make to the Congress and to this caucus is if we are going to help Colombians resolve these problems, we are going to have to stay the course and remain engaged for

many years, over many administrations, and over many Congresses.

Some of this testimony sounds very familiar to me. I was up here on this side ten years ago saying some of the same things. Senator Graham was involved in the first Andean strategy and one of the things that troubles me is that we tend to charge up the hill and then back down again when we do not solve our problems quickly. If you look at the funding for counter-narcotics in the Andean region, we ramped it up in 1990, 1991, 1992, and then it ramped back down again. Now we are going to ramp it back up.

But these problems are not going to be solved in a budget or Congressional cycle and we are going to have to develop a long-term strategy that hopefully has a bipartisan underpinning and then stay the course and show some patience, which we are not always so good as Americans in doing.

With regard to the specific issues that you are discussing, let me make a few recommendations, and I will try to be brief. First of all, all those who said that we must help the Colombian state strengthen its authority and capacity to defend the rule of law are correct, but the first underpinning of that is to help Colombia economically. Historically, this is the best managed economy in Latin America. This is the only economy in Latin America or South America that did not have to renegotiate its debt during the debt crisis. This country had 50 years of straight real growth, a very productive entrepreneurial class and hard working people.

But today, it is in the deepest recession of its modern history. There is huge unemployment. Capital is fleeing. They have had to devalue their currency twice. Most of that is not of the making of this government. They inherited a mess from the Samper government, which deliberately spent money to buy political support. They suffered the spillover of the Asian crisis, the Russian default, the Brazilian crisis. Coffee prices are at an historic low.

The economic team that President Pastrana has in place is a very good team. They have done a lot of the right things as far as reform, but they need some support. So I would urge the caucus and the Congress to join with the administration in signaling to the IMF and the World Bank and the IDB that this is a country that needs support now. They are assembling a support package with the IMF as we speak. I think they have earned it, but I think it would be very helpful if Congress sent those institutions a message that now is the time to help Colombia economically.

A second signal that I think would be very helpful to Colombia, particularly to the business class, which is taking its sons and daughters out and its capital out and is leaving the country, would be to join with the administration in a bipartisan manner and signal that the Congress is prepared to renew the Andean trade preference initiative. As you remember—I think both of you were here at the time if my memory serves me—we passed that legislation in 1991 specifically to help these countries fight the drug trade and to give them economic alternatives as they made war on the coca production and heroin production. It has been very important to Colombia. It is going to expire in the year 2001 and it would send a very good signal of confidence to the Colombian people and nation if we could get our act together early enough to start renewing

that and it would be very nice if President Pastrana could deliver that news.

Secondly, I hope we do not become polarized in a debate over whether we should support negotiations or help Colombians fight the war better and give their army support. We need to do both. I think the United States should make it clear that we unequivocally support a negotiated solution to this war if it is possible. That is what the vast majority of Colombians want and I believe at the end of the day that will be how this war will end, not necessarily immediately, and we should make it clear that the door to negotiations is open as far as the United States is concerned.

If the guerrillas have legitimate political, social, economic, and other issues, which they do, then they should be put on the table. But if they do not negotiate seriously, if they use violence, extortion, terror, kidnapping to make war in Colombian society, then the United States and the democratic community will help Colombia defend itself.

Therefore, I think we need what we have been talking about today, which is a long-term program to help the Colombian armed forces modernize itself. And again, I would strongly urge that we take a long view. This is not going to happen in a budget cycle. It is going to have to be over many years and many Congresses and many budget cycles, and the worst thing we could do to Colombia is to ramp up a program and raise expectations and then lose interest or lose will and change our mind and then go back and cut the legs out from under them. We have done that in the past. I hope we do not repeat that mistake.

I think that we must make it clear that that commitment to help Colombia modernize its armed forces is conditioned on strict human rights standards. They must continue, as President Pastrana has done with great courage, to root out officers who are abusers of human rights or tolerate that from the armed forces and have to do something about the paramilitaries.

The paramilitaries are part of the problem in Colombia, not part of the solution. Three-quarters of the human rights abuses are attributed to them. They murder priests. They murder journalists. They murder human rights workers. And they carry out a scorched earth policy in guerilla territory to just kill anybody who is suspected of being a sympathizer.

Now, in the short run, that does drive the guerrillas out of the territory. It has also produced more than a million internal refugees in this country, and where they go is straight into the arms of the FARC and the ELN and the paramilitaries are a very good recruiting tool for the guerrillas. So I think we need to strictly condition our long-term support for the armed forces on human rights standards, and particularly doing something about the paramilitaries.

Fourth, it is good that the United States Government is paying attention to this country in a serious way, but we cannot be the sole source of support. We need to rally and mobilize an international coalition of democratic nations, multilateral institutions, and nongovernmental organizations to support Colombia. That should include the democratic nations of Latin America, Canada, Europe, Japan. It should include the United Nations and the OAS.

It should include the multilateral development banks. It should include nongovernmental organizations. They need to support Colombia in the peace process, to talk to all the parties, just as we did vis-a-vis El Salvador. They also need to be mobilized to help this country defend itself should negotiations fail.

We cannot do this alone, nor should we. Britain has deep economic interests in this country through British Petroleum. All of the European countries have cocaine and heroin imports that originate in Colombia. We need to do more to bring other nations into this effort and Colombia needs more support from other nations, as well.

Fifth, and this is probably not a popular thing to say, but I learned something from the process in El Salvador. I think we should continue to keep channels open and talk to the guerrillas. They are everything that was said about them in this hearing. They are not boy scouts. The guerrillas started out in this process 40 years ago at a time of political struggle in this country. It had nothing to do with drugs. They have taken advantage of the drug trade, there is no question about that. They are complicit in the drug trade, there is no question about that.

But we and others have to bring these guerrillas out of the world in which they are living, which is 50 years old, into the modern world and begin to find ways to pressure, entice, cajole, and talk to them and get them into the bargaining process. We did that with the FMLN at a time when it was very risky. It was not popular. It made a difference in El Salvador. It was not popular to talk to the PLO when we started to do so, but today, they are part of the peace process. It was not popular to talk to the IRA, but they are part of the peace process.

We need to do that particularly as we gear up this effort, because the FARC believes the United States is going to war with it and half of Colombia and half of Latin America think we are going to intervene. I think it is important that they understand why we are doing what we are doing. We are doing what we are doing because they do not negotiate seriously and because they are complicit in the drug trade. But they also ought to understand, as we demonstrate in El Salvador, that if their agenda is real political, social, economic reform, that the United States can be an ally, because we are at risk in this country and we have lots of targets there and this guerilla group is very capable of making life very, very difficult for Americans.

A corollary to that is that I would urge that as we gear up, that we limit the on-the-ground involvement of American forces to the minimum necessary to aid and train and provide intelligence to the armed forces, as we did in El Salvador. I do not think we should be a big target here and I think we should make it clear that this is a Colombian effort and the United States is there to provide support.

A final point is I think we need to be clear about the relationship between the guerrillas and the narcotraffickers and not be confused about this. There is no question that the guerrillas sustain themselves through narcotrafficking activity and also extortion from the pipelines, the ELN does, and that in some cases, they are directly

involved in the trade. But the cartels and the mafias that run the drug trade in Colombia are not the ELN and the FARC.

In many ways, the traffickers benefit from the war. The war undermines the strength of the government. It diverts the army and the police. It saps the legitimacy of Colombian institutions. The war is the sea in which the traffickers swim and the best blow we could strike against the narcotraffickers is to bring the war to an end.

Now, it may be the case, and it probably is the case, that until the guerrillas understand that the option on the battlefield is not open to them, they may not negotiate seriously. I understand that in these kind of conflicts, the correlation of forces on the battlefield has a lot to do with progress at the negotiating table. But it ought to be our national goal to help end this war ultimately through negotiations, and our modernization of the armed forces should be a tool to pursue that. We should not kid ourselves. The FARC and the ELN could disappear tomorrow. We would still have home-grown Colombian cartels and mafias running cocaine and heroin into this country.

The last point is really the point that I began with, is we need to stay the course and take the long view. This problem is not going to be solved in a few months or even a few years, probably, and we have to be willing to sustain our support to Colombia in the right way, not take over their responsibility, but to do what we can and to mobilize others.

I am not a pessimist about this country. This country has enormous strengths and resources and its people have shown great courage in taking on the traffickers and the guerrillas and the paramilitaries, but they are in deep trouble today and it is spreading into the region. It is now a regional crisis and we need to pay serious attention as a country to it because we have deep interests in it. I would just note, among our interests beyond narcotrafficking, Venezuela, which is a neighbor, where the war is already spilling over, where you also have a lot of political instability, is the number one oil supplier to the United States today. So we have lots of deep interest in this country. We trade more with Colombia in one week than we do with every country in the former Yugoslavia in an entire year.

So I think that we need to work with the administration, hopefully in a bipartisan way, to develop a long-term strategy that deals with all of the aspects of this crisis. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Thank you, Mr. Aronson.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Aronson follows:]

Testimony before the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control

Colombia: Counterinsurgency vs. Counternarcotics

Bernard Aronson
Former Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs

Tuesday, September 21, 1999

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting me to testify.

Mr. Chairman I want to commend you, Senator Biden and the Members of the Committee for holding this timely hearing on Colombia. The United States usually goes wrong in Latin America, not because we intervene too quickly as conventional wisdom would suggest, but because, too often, we ignore the problems of the hemisphere until they deteriorate into crisis proportions and then seek to intervene when all of the policy choices have narrowed and often our own politics have become highly polarized. I hope and trust we won't make that mistake with regard to Colombia as we did unfortunately with regard to Central America.

I also commend the committee for pursuing this issue in a bipartisan manner. Nothing will undermine our policy towards Colombia more than to turn our legitimate debate about U.S. policy towards Colombia into a domestic, partisan issue. We should have learned that lesson, also, from Central America. As most of you who were there during that period know well, throughout the 1980's, when we were deeply divided along largely partisan lines, U.S. policy failed to achieve any of our objectives. When we united in 1989 around a Bipartisan Accord for Central America we were able to promote the first democratic change of power in Nicaragua, end the war in El Salvador, and set the stage for a successful peace policy in Guatemala. As a result today for the first time in history all the nations of Central America are at peace and all are led by popularly elected democratic leaders.

Your focus is the narcotics threat. This is an issue that I have been involved with for more than a decade. Indeed, the very first issue that confronted me when I went to the State Department in February 1989, pending confirmation, was the war of terror that the Medellin cartel had begun to wage on Colombia. At that time, the United States rushed vitally needed military assistance to the government, and helped its armed forces and police defend the nation against the campaign of terror, bombings, and assassinations that the Medellin cartel had launched. In December 1989, on behalf of the President, I traveled to Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia to meet with their Presidents to organize the first Andean Drug Summit in Cartagena, Colombia which was held in February 1990. There the Presidents of the United States, Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia developed and signed the first multi-lateral counternarcotics strategy in this hemisphere. And I was involved in the follow up summit, which included also the government of Mexico, which was held in San Antonio, Texas in 1992.

But as the title of this hearing suggests, you cannot segregate and separate out the issue of narcotics in Colombia from the larger crisis that is engulfing that country today, and that means the war there that has already claimed 35,000 lives and left more than 1 million Colombians refugees in their own country. The hard truth is that the war in Colombia has roots that go back more than forty years in the history of that country. There is no

simple solution. The issues in Colombia -- from drugs to corruption to political violence to social neglect to poverty to lawlessness and instability—are all inter-related and feed on each other.

If we are going to help Colombians resolve these problems, which is in their interest and ours, we must be willing to stay the course and remain engaged over many years and over many administrations. Frankly, we are not very good at that as a nation, particularly with regards to Latin America. We tend to have a relatively short-term attention span, often dictated by our domestic politics. We tend to charge up the hill and back down again all too often leaving our friends in the lurch after we reverse and change policy.

We must not repeat that pattern with regards to Colombia. For the stakes are very high for the United States and for Latin America. This is a large, important country of 40 million people, the second most populous in South America, with territory the size of Texas, New Mexico, and Arkansas, combined. Historically, it is the best-managed economy in the region and one of Latin America's oldest, continuing democracies.

What happens in Colombia will resonate for better or for worse throughout Latin America. Already, the crisis in Colombia is spreading regional political instability and is contributing to regional economic deterioration throughout the Andean region. The war in Colombia is already spilling across its borders into Venezuela, Ecuador, Panama, and Peru.

Clearly, also, what happens in Colombia affects our nation's strategic and economic interests and the health of our society. For as you know well, Colombia has emerged as the largest producer and supplier both of cocaine and heroin to the United States. And its neighbor Venezuela, today, is the largest foreign source of oil to the United States.

I want to speak to you very frankly about Colombia because unfortunately we live in a political climate in which sound bites too often take the place of serious discussion and short-term political advantage often overwhelms and swamps the long-term strategic interests of U.S. foreign policy.

In brief terms let me give you my best recommendations.

First, we must help strengthen Colombia economically. The Colombian government cannot wage either peace or war successfully while investor dollars flee because of fear about its future. Colombia today is suffering through its first recession in 50 years. Many of the causes, low coffee prices, irresponsible economic management by the previous government, and the spillover affects of the Asian financial crisis, the Russian default, and the Brazilian currency crisis are not of the current government's making. This year Colombia has had to devalue its currency twice. President Pastrana's economic team has consistently taken tough economic reform measures. Hopefully, its Congress will provide necessary support. But the country needs a vote of confidence.

The U.S. Congress and the Administration should make it clear to the International Monetary Fund, the Inter American Development Bank, the World Bank and other donor nations that we strongly support a sizeable package of balance of payments and other assistance for Colombia. Congress and the Administration could also send a welcome signal to foreign investors and Colombia's embattled business community by declaring their commitment to renew the Andean Trade Preference Initiative, set to expire in 2,001, which provides duty free access to most Colombian exports. As you know, in 1991, Congress with strong bipartisan consensus, passed this legislation, proposed by the previous Administration, specifically as a counter-narcotics measure designed to assist the principal drug producing nations in the Andes, and in particular, Colombia, develop economic alternatives as they pressed to eliminate the coca and poppy trade.

Second, we must not become polarized in a debate, particularly one with partisan overtones, about whether we should support the peace process in Colombia or provide increased assistance to modernize the Colombian armed forces. Today, we can and must do both. The United States must make it clear unequivocally that we support a negotiated settlement to the war in Colombia, and that this policy has broad bipartisan support in the Congress as well as the Administration. The fact is that neither side can defeat the other decisively. This war has deep social and political roots. Ultimately, the only lasting solution will be to bring all sides together around the table and find common ground in social, economic, and political reform in Colombia. We should make it clear that the door to negotiations is always open and that it is up to the guerrillas to shut that door, but the United States will never do so.

At the same time, the guerrillas must understand that should they refuse to negotiate seriously as they have done so far, the democratic community will help the government of Colombia defend itself and defend the rule of law. If the guerrillas have a genuine program of political and economic reform it ought to be on the table; but if they hope to achieve their goals through violence, extortion, kidnapping, and war, the democratic community will help the government and the people of Colombia defend themselves.

To send that message clearly, and to achieve a strategic stalemate that might make serious negotiations possible, I believe Colombia needs a program of a sustained modernization of its armed forces and that program must be one that will survive budget cycles and political cycles. We must make it clear to the Colombian Government that we will stay the course. But we must also make it clear to the government and the armed forces of Colombia that U.S. assistance is strictly conditioned on real and continued progress in rooting out human rights abusers from the armed forces and a concrete program to dismantle the paramilitaries. The paramilitaries practice a scorched earth policy towards any and all Colombians suspected of guerilla sympathies, including journalists, priest, and the human rights community. Indeed, the guerrillas have no better recruiting tool than the paramilitaries, which massacre civilians and have helped displace over a million internal refugees, far more than have been displaced in Kosovo.

The United States must work also with the Government of Colombia to mobilize an international coalition of democratic nations, multi-lateral institutions, and non-governmental organizations to support negotiations, reach out to and engage neighboring countries in a constructive way, talk to, cajole, pressure, and entice the guerillas, and help the Government of Colombia defend itself should the negotiating option fail. That community must start here in this hemisphere with other nations from Latin America and Canada, but it must extend to democratic nations in Europe, Japan and others. And it must include the active engaged involvement of the United Nations and the Organizations of American States.

The United States must also continue to find channels to talk to the guerillas, directly, hopefully through a bipartisan mechanism involving both Congress and the Administration. I know this is not popular. Nor were the first U.S. contacts with the P.L.O, the I.R.A., or the F.M.L.N. guerillas in El Salvador. But part of the problem in Colombia is that you have a guerilla force, particularly the largest guerilla army the FARC, that is extremely isolated from the currents sweeping Latin America and indeed the modern democratic community, and that isolation only makes them more intransigent and more dangerous.

The areas in which the guerrillas are active have been long neglected by the central government; they are to some extent states within a state. A major effort must be made to open these areas to economic progress to develop economic alternatives to drug trafficking, to provide government services, land and other needed benefits. That will take money and the Colombian Government alone cannot afford the price; with our democratic allies around the world, we must begin to assemble a significant aide package from the International Community and make it available as both an inducement to and a guarantor of any negotiated settlement.

We must be clear, also, about the relationship between the guerrillas and the narcotraffickers, and not confuse ourselves about this issue. There is no question that the guerillas provide protection to coca and poppy growers and to the drug traffickers' networks in parts of Colombia in exchange for funds they use to finance their armies. To the extent to which the guerillas are complicit in the drug trade they are a legitimate part of any counter narcotics program. However, the traffickers and the cartels that organize finance and run the drug trade are not the FARC or the ELN. I say this because there are some who seem to believe and would have the American people believe that there is an easy, military solution to this war and that once the guerrillas were defeated militarily that would end the drug problem in Colombia. It would not. This war long pre-dated Colombia's emergence as a center of cocaine and now heroin production. Drugs were never the principle issue in the conflict between the guerrillas and the government, nor are they today.

In truth, the greatest blow we could strike against the drug cartels and the drug traffickers in Colombia is to bring the war to an end. . For the war is the sea in which the traffickers swim. They benefit from the instability and violence, corruption and weakening of the

state that the war has brought to Colombia. If the war were over, the Colombian nation could focus its energies, resources, and defense forces on the greatest threat it faces, the narcotrafficking cartels, and the corruption they have brought to Colombia's political system, its Congress, judiciary and other vital institutions.

Although the situation looks grave, I am not a pessimist about Colombia's future; we should not forget the enormous resources this country possesses. This is a country that for 50 years up until last year has posted steady real growth. This is a country that never had to renegotiate or restructure its national debt even in the deepest depths of the Latin American drug crisis. This is a country whose entrepreneurial class is as good as any you will find in the world and whose people are hard working and productive. Perhaps most important this is a nation whose judges, human rights workers, journalists, honest politicians, soldiers and police, and ordinary citizens have shown enormous, sustained courage in defending their nation against the drug traffickers and the violence waged against them by the traffickers, guerrillas and the paramilitaries, with thousands paying with their lives.

There is a huge constituency for peace in this country and there is no political support for continued violence. President Pastrana himself said it eloquently in his inaugural address. He said: "I am here to express the voice of a country that wants peace, that seeks social justice, and is ready to carry out politics as an exercise of the common good. Colombia cannot go on divided into three irreconcilable countries, where one country kills, the other dies, and a third, horrified, scratches its head and shuts its eyes."

The real question is will this war end sooner rather than later and at what cost to Latin America and to its neighbors in this hemisphere. Ultimately that decision will depend on Colombia, but what we do or fail to do in the United States will also make a large difference. I would urge to this Committee and all of its Members to join with others in the Congress and the Administration in forging a new bipartisan consensus on Colombia that allows us to speak with one voice and act with one clear strategy towards this nation. If we do that, if we defend our interests and our values over the long run, if we play a role that is legitimate but do not try to usurp the legitimate responsibility of Colombians for solving their own problems, I believe we can make an important and constructive difference in advancing the cost of peace, the rule of law and the reduction of the narcotrafficking threat that Colombia represents today. Thank you very much.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Now, Mr. Shifter.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL SHIFTER, SENIOR FELLOW, INTER-AMERICAN DIALOGUE

Mr. SHIFTER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me also commend you and the caucus for holding this hearing on Colombia. I think it is extremely important to have a public discussion and debate on this critical policy question.

I am going to submit my testimony for the record and just make some brief comments, if I might.

Let me start with the question of what I think the purpose we want to achieve in Colombia is. The objective, to me, seems clear, or should be clear. We should do whatever we can to strengthen the Colombian government's authority, capacity, and effectiveness. It is clear that all of the problems that Colombia is dealing with today can be attributed to the weakness of the government and the state, whether we are talking about human rights abuses, drug trafficking, paramilitary operations, or political violence, can be traced back to a weak authority and a weak state.

The responsibility to strengthen the authority of the state and the government, Colombians have primary responsibility, but we can be helpful. We can support their efforts to reach a political solution to the deep internal conflict that has been going on for many years. We could also do another thing. The Colombian government will need a consensus within its own country to back and support any plan or strategy. We can help and encourage different political forces and sectors—we have a lot of contacts in Colombia—to get behind the Colombian government in a solid support for its plan.

Pursuing this call, supporting the government makes Colombia a better partner with us in dealing with the problems that we share, narcotics being one of several. But Colombia will only be a good partner, only be effective in working with us if the government can reestablish and regain authority and greater effectiveness. We cannot be indifferent to Colombia and we cannot disengage from Colombia.

The second point has to do with U.S. policy, and here, Mr. Aronson, I agree entirely that a bipartisan policy is absolutely essential. Too often in the past, we have dealt with different individuals in the Colombian government, whether it be in the armed forces or the police. They may be very dedicated, very committed, but that does not help strengthen our primary objective, which is enhancing government authority. We need to deal more with the elected, legitimate head of state of Colombia, President Pastrana. That will be the best thing to do to enhance that objective.

The third point is that it is critical to have a wide-ranging, comprehensive approach towards Colombia. The peace process, the drug question, severe economic crisis, and the profound social problems that Colombia faces are connected to one another and need to be addressed together, not separately. That is also the best way we can strengthen the authority and the effectiveness of the Colombian government.

All of these problems are interrelated and Colombia already has a process underway to try to bring an end to its guerilla conflict and to reconcile the forces in conflict. Their strategy, their plan in-

volves a wide-ranging approach and that is the only way that we can be helpful in strengthening the capacity to move forward and make progress.

Clearly, over the last year, there have been tremendous problems, set-backs, frustrations, and disappointments. The last year has not gone as well as many of us had hoped and President Pastrana himself acknowledges that. But there are three points, I think, to bear in mind in this connection.

First, despite the tremendous discouragement on the part of Colombians, most Colombians continue to favor the objective of trying to reach a negotiated settlement and some sort of solution, political solution, to the internal conflict.

The second point is that the United States is perhaps uniquely positioned because of its capacity, because of its resources, to be helpful in the Colombian situation.

The third point is that the other options do not look very good. Many sustain that it would be very, very difficult, if not impossible, to defeat the FARC militarily, that it would cost a tremendous amount that we would not be prepared to commit in terms of resources and time, financial resources and American lives. So to pursue a strategy that focuses on defeating through military means, through the use of force, the FARC, in my judgment, would be misguided and could only make matters worse, including fueling a civil war and a dirty war in Colombia, which already exists but could very well get worse.

It seems to me we want to avoid that narrow, single-minded approach. Even though it is understandable that the perception is that guerrillas and narcotraffickers are one in the same, I agree with Mr. Aronson it is important to keep that distinction. But if we confuse that, then we can go down the path that I think could aggravate an already very critical and serious situation.

The final point, again underscoring what Mr. Aronson said, is that the United States should play a role, a diplomatic role, on the regional and international stage with respect to Colombia. There are wider regional concerns. There are concerns of instability in neighboring countries. There is great concern in countries in Latin America about Colombia and about the spreading violence and instability. There is also good will to help and be supportive and the United States, I think, can play an important role in trying to make a collective, constructive response from the heads of government in neighboring countries.

There is clearly going to be some instrument as this process moves forward that is viable and that tries to sustain and support internationally externally this process in Colombia, whether that is the U.N. or whether that is a group of friends or the Organization of American States. Clearly, some mechanism, some instrument will emerge, and I think the United States should be supportive of that instrument in trying to advance Colombia's objective.

In short, this instrument would serve the purpose of supporting, strengthening the Colombian government's authority and capacity. That goal is in the interest of all Colombians, it is in the interest of Colombia's neighbors, and it is the interest of the international community, as well, and I think it best serves our interests and our goals and I think we should give it the support we can. Thank you.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Thank you, Mr. Shifter.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Shifter follows:]

Testimony before the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
Colombia: Counterinsurgency vs. Counternarcotics

Michael Shifter
Senior Fellow, Inter-American Dialogue
Tuesday, September 21, 1999

Mr. Chairman, I very much appreciate your invitation to appear before the Caucus this morning to discuss US policy towards Colombia. This is precisely the right time to ask hard questions, and engage in an open, public debate about where the policy is heading -- and ought to be heading. Our interests and goals in Latin America's third largest country deserve serious discussion. That is why this hearing is so important.

Let me start with the question of what purpose we want to achieve in Colombia. The objective should be clear: we need to do all we can to strengthen the Colombian government's authority, capabilities and effectiveness. Our efforts should go towards helping the government reach a political solution to the country's deep, internal conflict. We should also do what we can to encourage the government to develop a consensus within Colombian society that is grounded on the need for social justice and adherence to the rule of law.

In many respects, Colombia's severe problems can be attributed to the weakness of the country's institutions. These institutions have not been able to deal effectively with rising violence and insecurity, drug production and trafficking, human rights abuses, and the increasing movement of Colombian citizens, both within the country and beyond its borders. Strengthening those institutions, of course, is the ultimate challenge and responsibility facing all Colombians.

But the United States can be helpful and can act as a constructive partner in this effort. Doing so would serve US interests. It would help make Colombia a better partner in dealing with the major problems that affect both nations. The United States does not have the luxury of remaining indifferent to Colombia, or disengaging from the country. In light of so many shared problems, that is not an option.

To help the Colombian government calls for greater discipline and coherence among different US government agencies. A bipartisan policy is essential. We need to articulate our policy in a clear, consistent voice. This is important in dealing with a complex Colombian government.

To the extent possible, we should deal less with key figures in the police, armed forces, or judicial system, however impressive and important these individuals may be. We should, rather, deal directly with the head of Colombia's elected government, Andrés Pastrana. We should work hard to minimize conflicting signals and messages in our Colombia policy.

The policy needs to reflect a global, comprehensive approach. Colombia's multi-faceted problems call for an integral response. The peace process, the drug question, the severe economic crisis, and the profound social problems are connected to each other, and they all need to be addressed together.

It is less important to think about how many resources are being used for economic assistance -- or for support to the police or military for counternarcotics -- than to insist that such resources be directed explicitly towards strengthening government authority and capacity. That's the fundamental standard against which we should judge any proposal or recommendation for US assistance and involvement in Colombia.

By moving in this direction, the United States would be helping a troubled country address an array of acute problems. We would also be taking advantage of a process already underway in Colombia that seeks to bring the guerrilla war to an end and to reconcile the forces in conflict. That process, to be sure, has suffered setbacks and frustrations since President Pastrana launched it more than a year ago. It will continue to have its share of disappointments. The conditions are far from ideal. The process will necessarily be long-term and will require great patience.

Pursuing a comprehensive approach is the best of all options regarding Colombia. It is an option most Colombians ultimately favor, despite many discouraging developments. It is also an option the United States is uniquely positioned to back. We have the capacity and resources to be helpful. The approach will most strengthen the Colombian government -- and most help us.

The only other possible option would be to try to defeat the FARC, Colombia's principal insurgency, through military means. Whether one calls it counternarcotics or counterinsurgency, focusing only on targeting the FARC for defeat in this way would be a misguided course, fraught with substantial risks. It would require more resources – in terms of money, time, and American lives – than we would, or should, be prepared to commit. Not only would the costs be too great for the United States, but it would also do little to help us address the immense problems that affect both countries, narcotics particularly.

More seriously, the military option would only fuel more violence in Colombia, and would push the country closer to a full civil war, or a “dirty war,” on a scale that we have not yet seen. The situation in the country is already critical. A narrow, single-minded focus on a policy aimed only at fighting drugs would have serious, negative consequences and would only make matters worse. We must avoid that myopic course.

We should also play a crucial, diplomatic role on the regional and international stages. There is no question that Colombia will need sustained external support to deal effectively with its multiple conflicts. While there is considerable concern about the deteriorating situation in Colombia, especially by neighboring countries, there is also ample goodwill and interest in supporting a collective, constructive solution.

The United States can and should assist the chosen, multilateral instrument that emerges in the Colombian process. We should do what we can to help to make the most viable instrument develop. The instrument may be a group of “friends” of Colombia, the United Nations, the regional Organization of American States, or some combination of these.

If it is effectively and productively employed, it could very well help strengthen the Colombian government's authority and capacity. This goal is in the interest of all Colombians, Colombia's hemispheric neighbors, and the international community. It is also best serves our own interests and values, and should get our full support.

Thank you very much for this opportunity. I would be happy to clarify or expand on any of these points, or answer any questions you might have.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

M2 SUNDAY, JULY 25, 1999 / NA

COLOMBIA

First Signs
of a Policy
Nightmare

By Michael Shifter

Colombia is quickly becoming a "front burner" issue for U.S. foreign policy. The reasons—escalating violence and rising drug production—are not hard to discern. But what the United States expects to accomplish in dealing with the hemisphere's most troubled country remains a mystery.

Washington's impulse to "do something" and "get tough" is understandable, even legitimate. But that impulse needs to flow from a hard-headed assessment of what goals are realistic and feasible, a clear understanding of how far the United States is prepared to go and a rigorous analysis of possible consequences and liabilities.

The United States' creeping involvement in Latin America's third-largest country is undeniable. Colombia ranks third, after Israel and Egypt, in receiving U.S. security assistance. This year, the U.S. is providing some \$289 million to Colombia in counternarcotics assistance, three times the amount it gave in 1993, which had already doubled each of the preceding two years. The bulk of the money goes to Colombia's national police; the country's military receives about \$40 million. In addition, the U.S. is sharing intelligence information with the military.

Few doubt that more—perhaps substantially more—is yet to come. Recently, after meeting in Washington with Colombia's defense minister and armed forces chief, Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey, U.S. drug czar, proposed increasing the amount of support to drug-producing countries by \$1 billion, nearly \$600 million of which would go to Colombia (more than the Colombians themselves requested). McCaffrey defended his proposal by citing the "explosion" in cocaine production and spreading insecurity. Fighting drugs, in fact, remains the only rationale for U.S. Colombia policy that is politically popular and palatable with the American people.

Michael Shifter is a senior fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue and teaches Latin American politics at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.

But over the past several months, the loss of government authority and frightening advances by insurgents, toward the capital city of Bogotá as well as across the borders of neighboring countries, have deepened Washington's concerns. Insurgent and paramilitary activities, a pervasive drug economy, political and institutional decay and an unprecedented recession (unemployment is at a record 20%) produce conditions that seem to deteriorate by the day. Colombians who are able to leave are doing so in droves.

President Andres Pastrana, taking a big risk in dealing with decades-long, seemingly intractable violence, has identified peace as his highest priority. Yet, with almost a year in office, he has little to show for the effort. His administration has suffered repeated setbacks and occasional humiliations, both military and political, in its pursuit of peace. Talks with insurgents have now been postponed.

To be fair to Pastrana, making progress with the country's most formidable insurgent force is anything but easy. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which dates to the 1950s, is militarily and financially stronger than ever. Its roughly 15,000 combatants operate with a network whose members are estimated at two to three times that number. Aside from power in some form, it is not entirely clear what they want.

After an auspicious meeting last July between then-president-elect Pastrana and the FARC's undisputed leader, Manuel "Sureshot" Marulanda, the country's chief guerrilla force has been obstinate in its behavior and unreasonable in its demands. There is a growing perception that the FARC is fundamentally uninterested in negotiations and that the insurgency is simply distracting the government while bolstering its position. Recent declarations by FARC leaders questioning the Colombian government's goodwill don't inspire confidence.

From the outset, Pastrana's idea has been to deal with the FARC before turning to Colombia's other major violent forces, the leftist National Liberation Army (ELN) and the rightist militia groups, each with approximately 5,000 combatants. But the FARC's recalcitrance, coupled with the militias' and ELN's ruthlessness and perverseness—the ELN's kidnappings of airplane passengers and churchgoers shocked an already numbed nation—have made it difficult for the Colombian president to succeed. Although a government negotiating team and FARC leaders announced a common agenda May 2, the areas for discussion remain exceedingly vague and cover the gamut, from reforming the justice system to redistributing land.

All this disheartening news has raised serious questions, both in Washington and in Colombia, about the clarity and coherence of Pastrana's peace strategy and even about the desirability of trying to negotiate with the insurgents. It is thus not surprising that U.S. policymakers find themselves edging toward greater support for Colombia's security forces, whose principal goal is, after all, defeating the guerrillas.

Yet, is it, in fact, the purpose of U.S. Colombia policy to defeat the guerrillas? Is it to reduce drug production? Or, taking a page from the U.S. role in El Salvador in the 1980s, to "level the playing field," which would enhance the Colombian government's leverage to negotiate peace with the insurgents?

For many U.S. officials, the answer is all the above. They regard the guerrillas and those involved in the drug trade, producers and traffickers, as virtually indistinguishable. They are interconnected in complex ways. But they are distinct and ought to be understood as such.

Important consequences flow from such a misunderstanding. For one, trade-offs among different policy aims tend to be ignored and belittled. There needs to be greater appreciation that not all objectives have equal weight—and not all policies, however valuable and well-intentioned, can be pursued at the same time.

The evolving U.S. policy toward Colombia also raises some human-rights questions. The country's human-rights situation is dire by any measure, with about 1 million Colombians displaced from their homes. The vast majority of all political killings are committed by the country's expanding militia groups, whose links with the armed forces are varied and complicated, often depending on the region. Confrontations between the armed forces and the paramilitary groups have been rare. Although U.S. law requires any military unit that receives U.S. assistance to be thoroughly vetted, in practice this is hard to monitor and is bound to be highly contentious.

Human-rights questions aside, however, what's crucial is to face squarely what military aid to Colombia actually means. Should the United States make defeating the guerrillas its main goal? If so, how much would that cost and how long would it take? Once undertaken, how far is Washington prepared to go? The Colombian situation has all the elements of "mission creep." But military assistance is, at best, only part of what needs to be a comprehensive approach to help Colombia deal with its underlying problems.

That is precisely why pursuing a program of reform and reconciliation is so essential. Increased U.S. support for the Colombian armed forces should be seriously considered. But that step should be an appendage of a broader strategy. The aim should be to improve the Colombian government's capabilities and leverage, to enable it to negotiate from strength.

The risk, however, is that advocates of military support will be too focused on that limited aspect. We cannot lose sight of the longer-term task of working with Colombia to help the country construct a more inclusive society and just, institutional order.

Few doubt that Colombia is at war. The United States, in conjunction with its hemispheric neighbors, can—and should—help the country arrive at that day when Colombians no longer consider violence their first option. □

Colombia on the Brink

There Goes the Neighborhood

Michael Shifter

In May 1988, following the abduction of a prominent politician, former Colombian President Misael Pastrana Borrero remarked, "Last year I said we were on the verge of the abyss. Today, I think we are in it."

These days, Pastrana's son Andrés—who has himself led Colombia since August 1998—has reason to be even more pessimistic. Colombia is worse off in many ways than it was a decade ago. The country's violent forces—left-wing insurgents and right-wing militias—have never been better armed and financed or held more territory. Colombia's drug economy, with its pernicious effects, is as pervasive as ever. And the government is running out of options.

Until recently, widespread violence and crime somehow coexisted in Colombia with sound—by regional standards, exceptional—economic performance. Today, however, Colombia has sunk into a deep, unrelieved recession, exacerbated by the earthquake that devastated its coffee-growing region in January. The only major

Latin American country that did not have to renegotiate its foreign debt in the 1980s is reeling.

What distinguishes the current crises from the many Colombia has weathered in the past is the inability of the country's leaders to respond effectively. Despite the new peace talks announced on May 3 of this year, the guerrillas' willingness to engage in serious negotiations remains in doubt. And ordinary Colombians—the vast majority of whom are committed to peace—have grown more divided than ever. Mistrust lies at every turn.

Colombia's deterioration has made its neighbors apprehensive and spread serious concern as far as the United States. As the deterioration deepens, it becomes ever more obvious that any solution will require the sustained support of these other nations. Americans may be skeptical of greater involvement in a country that, when they think of it at all, they tend to consider corrupt and drug-ridden. But they will suffer the consequences if they remain indifferent.

MICHAEL SHIFTER is Senior Fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue and teaches Latin American politics at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.

*Colombia on the Brink***A VOLATILE MIX**

As Colombia's crises grow more virulent, its citizens wonder in desperation what it will take to emerge from the abyss. To answer that question requires understanding how Colombia got there in the first place.

Many observers hoped that the end of the Cold War, together with Latin America's impressive turn to democratic politics, would help move Colombia away from the brink. Yet while Central America's guerrillas have demobilized and Peru's rebels have been crippled, in Colombia, two of the hemisphere's oldest insurgencies are militarily and financially stronger than ever.

Colombia's principal guerrilla organizations—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN)—date back to the 1960s. The FARC emerged from the period of uncommonly fierce, sustained land battles known as La Violencia (1948–1965), which claimed some 200,000 lives.

During the Cold War, both guerrilla groups steeped themselves in Marxist doctrine. The rural-based FARC was the larger of the two and remains so today, with approximately 15,000 combatants. The ELN began as a student movement with links to the liberation theology strand of the Catholic Church. Today, its 5,000 troops are concentrated in the northeast, where Colombia's oil industry (the ELN's principal prey and source of revenue) is located. Both groups once had ties to Cuba, though today neither takes instructions from Fidel Castro.

The mid-1980s proved to be a critical turning point in the dynamics of political violence in Colombia. It was then that the FARC sought to enter mainstream politics by setting up the Patriotic Union

(UP) party. The country's large landowners, threatened by the UP's electoral advances in the 1986 local elections, contracted paramilitary units—often with the tacit or open support of Colombia's armed forces—to wage a systematic campaign of extermination against UP officials. Several thousand were killed in just a few years. A good deal of the mistrust that today blocks any peace effort between the FARC and the Colombian government can be traced to this traumatic period.

As for their objectives, it is unclear whether the FARC and the ELN want to shape national policies or are bent on maintaining outright control over the territory they have taken. Some experts maintain that the rebels still cling to their old dream of toppling the government and seizing state power. Yet the agendas of both guerrilla groups, though they point to broad ideals of social justice, are in fact exceedingly vague and fluid.

More clear is the fact that both the FARC and the ELN are well financed. The two groups have combined revenues of about \$900 million a year, some \$500 million of which is derived from taxes on coca producers and the rest of which comes from kidnapping and extortion. It would be a mistake, however, to see the guerrilla groups as common criminals or drug mafias (although some of the FARC's fronts seem to closely fit that mold). Their criminal activities help sustain a political agenda. Nor are they rigid ideologues, resistant to reason. The rebels should instead be viewed as fundamentally pragmatic actors, out to advance political, economic, and strategic interests.

This cannot be said for Colombia's many criminal gangs. Colombia has a long history of illegal economic activities;

Michael Shifter

emeralds, for example, were once the subject of a huge illegal traffic. And for at least two decades now Colombia has been one of the main engines driving the international drug trade (an engine fueled largely by U.S. demand). Though reliable data are hard to come by, drug proceeds amount to an estimated 25 to 35 percent of the country's total exports. Meanwhile, with the effective elimination of the Medellín and Cali cartels over the past several years, the drug industry has become more fractured, making it harder to control. Today narcotics have penetrated nearly all spheres of Colombian society, politics, and economics. The cumulative effects of drug trafficking and the spreading insurgencies—coupled with a rampantly corrupt political system that has long excluded large sectors of the citizenry—have exacerbated the country's immense institutional problems.

A TOXIC CURE

Colombians have long been aware of their many problems and have sought to address them in various ways. Meanwhile, Colombia has somehow managed to hold election after election despite its many crises. The region's oldest insurgencies coexist with South America's longest stretch of civilian, constitutional rule.

Reform efforts have included a new constitution adopted in 1991, which was designed to modernize the political system and enhance the rule of law. Some of the mechanisms introduced have been effective, others less so. Reforms of the country's political parties, aimed at enhancing accountability, have been tried but yielded little. Although Colombia's judicial system has received considerable assistance from the United States, it too

continues to function poorly, with high levels of impunity.

Periodically, Colombian administrations have launched a variety of peace efforts, also with mixed results. Colombians have paid a tremendous price—in financial, institutional, and most tragically, human terms—to fight drugs and curb their consequences.

But the most disturbing symptom of the failure of Colombia's institutions has been the exponential growth of the paramilitary forces, now estimated to number 4,000 to 5,000 combatants. These militias, frustrated by the country's demoralized and debilitated security forces, seek to counter insurgent advances. They have grown more sophisticated over the years since the army and landowners first organized them as self-defense units in the 1980s. Like the insurgents, the paramilitaries are now spread out and are often fueled by the drug economy. In some cases they have developed right-wing political identities and agendas and have shown a keen interest in Colombia's political game.

The existence and nature of the militias' links to the army are hotly contested. Direct connections between the two have been established in some cases. More often, state agents have merely looked the other way when paramilitary units have committed atrocities. Chiefly as a result of growing international pressure, there have been a number of recent attempts to break such ties. In April, Pastrana dismissed two generals with reported paramilitary connections. But direct confrontations between the security forces and paramilitary units have been rare.

Colombia on the Brink

Political violence, the drug economy, and an acute institutional crisis have contributed to the most dire human rights situation in the hemisphere. Roughly ten Colombians are killed every day in political violence. All the country's armed factions commit gross abuses. But both credible human rights groups and the State Department blame the paramilitaries for the lion's share—three-quarters of all of Colombia's political killings in 1998.

Most victims have tended to be poor noncombatants. They figure disproportionately among the more than one million Colombians forced from their homes since the mid-1980s. According to Human Rights Watch, Colombia has the fourth-largest internally displaced population in the world. The poor are also the principal victims of Colombia's pervasive social and criminal violence, which accounts for some 85 percent of the country's 30,000 annual homicides.

THE OVERFLOW EFFECT

Colombia's deteriorating conditions are not only wreaking havoc at home but have begun spilling over into neighboring countries, arousing substantial concern in an already troubled region.

Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori has taken the toughest public stance in response. In a February speech to the Inter-American Defense College in Washington, D.C., Fujimori dispensed with diplomatic niceties and openly criticized President Pastrana's attempt to negotiate with the insurgents—a tactic Fujimori sees as inferior to the hard-line formula he used to defeat Peru's own Shining Path and Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. Fujimori made his displeasure all the more clear when he

subsequently ordered troops to the Colombian border.

Relations with Venezuela are also on edge. Hugo Chávez Frías, the former lieutenant colonel and failed coup leader who was elected Venezuela's president in December 1998, has declared his government's neutrality in the Colombian conflict. What looked like an innocuous gesture has actually amounted to an implicit recognition of the insurgents' belligerent status, something the Colombian government has consistently and pointedly opposed. Chávez has authorized talks in Venezuela with ELN representatives and has offered to play a mediating role in the Colombian dispute. Complicating matters, there have been reported incursions of ELN forces across the Venezuelan border, creating security problems between the two countries. And Colombian paramilitary leaders have threatened to pursue insurgents wherever they surface—including at peace talks in Venezuela.

The violence has also spilled over into Ecuador. Last February, an Ecuadorian congressman accused by paramilitary forces of being a major arms supplier to the FARC was assassinated on the streets of Quito, Ecuador's capital city, and Colombia's insurgents have kidnapped several Ecuadorian businessmen.

Both the paramilitaries and the FARC also operate in Panama. With the Panamanian army having disbanded in the wake of the December 1989 U.S. intervention—and with U.S. troops scheduled to pull out entirely by December 1999—these incursions have become more unsettling.

Michael Shifter

COMING TO (NORTH) AMERICA

The FARC's murder of three American human rights workers in Venezuelan territory in March underlined the brutality of Colombia's civil war and its mounting regional repercussions. It also called attention to the role of the United States in the unfolding drama.

For most of this century, the two countries have enjoyed close and friendly relations. This is due in some measure to Colombia's exemplary economic management and its adherence to civilian, constitutional government since the early 1960s. For many years, Washington held up Latin America's third-largest country as a model of good governance and a close partner in President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress aid program.

Colombia's entanglement with the drug trade in the mid-1980s changed all of that. Since then, U.S. Colombia policy has been nearly indistinguishable from U.S. antinarcotics policy. The reasons are hardly mysterious: some 80 percent of the world's cocaine is produced in Colombia, along with roughly three-quarters of the heroin seized by authorities on the east coast of the United States.

The problem, however, is that U.S. Colombia policy tends to be single-minded, inflexible, and driven by the desire to look tough on drugs. As a result, it is often counterproductive. Any option that might conceivably soften antidrug efforts is deemed unacceptable by Washington. But while also committed to fighting drugs, Colombians give higher priority to regaining control over their territory and to improving security. To be sure, these objectives often coincide. But they can also clash, and when they do, tensions between the countries have risen.

The bilateral relationship reached a low point during the 1994-98 presidency of Ernesto Samper Pizano, who was credibly accused of having accepted some \$6 million from the Cali drug cartel in his 1994 campaign. Samper's U.S. visa was revoked and, in 1996 and 1997, the United States fully decertified Colombia for failing to cooperate in the fight against drugs. Decertification demoralized and alienated Colombians and undermined their government's credibility.

Fortunately, the election of Pastrana last June has substantially improved the relationship. This was reflected by the recertification of Colombia in March 1999 and Congress' approval in October 1998 of some \$289 million in counter-narcotics assistance (tripling the amount previously provided). This new package makes Colombia by far the leading recipient of U.S. security aid in the western hemisphere—and the third in the world, behind Israel and Egypt.

The increased aid includes some \$40 million for an air-mobile army battalion to help in the antidrug effort. This marks a significant development, since U.S. aid to the Colombian army had been suspended in 1996 due to its troubling human rights record (the money went to the national police instead). Today, support is still restricted and should be carefully monitored in accordance with U.S. law. Human rights remain a key concern.

Despite the promising changes, the relationship between the two countries remains uneasy and ambivalent. Multiple U.S. actors—the Defense, State, and Justice Departments, the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and key congressional representatives—compete to shape policy. Skeptics in the U.S. Congress have taken

Colombia on the Brink

sharp public aim at the meetings between State Department officials and FARC representatives, especially in light of what they regard as the insurgents' stubborn behavior and unreasonable demands (and the FARC's designation as a "terrorist" group). And members of Congress have been critical of Pastrana's meetings with Fidel Castro to explore a Cuban role in brokering a settlement with the rebels.

DOES PEACE HAVE A CHANCE?

Pastrana's attempt to pursue peace has encountered inevitable setbacks and countless frustrations. The high expectations that accompanied his election, buoyed by public meetings with the rebels, have since largely dissipated. Tragically, what little American support remained for the peace effort was further undercut in March by the FARC's brutal assassination of three Americans, and by the ELN's hijacking of a Colombian airplane the following month.

Deep-seated mistrust on all sides and excessive political fragmentation remain core obstacles. Good-faith gestures by Pastrana, such as the demilitarization of five zones in the southern part of the country, have only been met by additional demands. The FARC has pressed for a hostage swap and the ELN has insisted on the demilitarization of territory where it has a substantial presence. But the frustrated Pastrana administration has refused to yield on either score.

The brutality of the expanding paramilitary forces remains a thorny problem. The much anticipated peace talks with the rebels in early 1999 failed to get off the ground for just this reason: the FARC demanded that the government rein in these militias. But it is unclear whether the government is willing or able to do

so. Thus despite the recent announcement of new negotiations, peace remains on hold. The FARC leadership is deeply suspicious of any effort that does not first deal with the paramilitaries—for its memories of the brutal campaign against the FARC's political wing are still fresh.

To be fair to Pastrana, it is hard to know what else, exactly, the insurgents want. The rebels constantly move the goal posts. But equally uncertain is whether Colombia's president has the leadership skills necessary to marshal and sustain the backing of key sectors of society for a complicated, long-term peace effort that will involve further sacrifices.

A FEW FUTURES

Few countries have exhibited as much resilience as has Colombia. It has defied apocalyptic forecasts before and may do so again. Even with unprecedented economic and institutional problems exacerbating political and drug-related violence, Colombia could continue to muddle along for some time. But its survival depends on the ability to keep some sort of peace talks—however halting and sporadic—alive. Partial solutions will result in intense fighting and continued bloodletting.

A slight variant on this scenario could make things worse still. Should the talks completely break down and the Colombian government collapse, the country could slip into a full-scale conflict with terrible consequences. This could mean an open campaign against the insurgents or an intensified dirty war by the paramilitary forces. The humanitarian consequences would be devastating.

Such scenarios make finding an alternative course all the more necessary; a solution that encompasses some form of

Michael Shifter

political reconciliation is essential. For reconciliation to occur, the United States and the international community must support the process in a number of ways: helping to mediate a settlement, economically assisting social reform projects linked to negotiations, publicly pressuring the government to check the paramilitaries, and cooperating with the Pastrana administration.

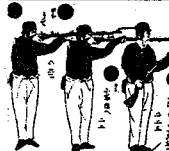
Of course, external actors can only do so much good. But the last several years have shown that they can easily make things worse by unnecessarily undermining the Pastrana administration in the name of some narrow political interest or by diverting it from its overriding objective.

Colombians have to assume the main role for defining, addressing, and overcoming their core problems. Comprehensive institutional renewal—military, political, and judicial reform—should dominate the agenda. The nongovernmental groups that were energized by the peace effort in mid-1998 need to maintain their resolve. With new peace talks on the horizon, some sign of good faith by both rebel groups would also help. And Colombia's elites should be prepared to make sacrifices.

Perhaps most critically, the Colombian government needs to strengthen its coherence and legitimacy. It can do so by pursuing a clear strategy of political reconciliation—one that sets firm objectives, spells out what it is prepared and not prepared to accept, and organizes available resources accordingly.

Effective leadership is central to such a challenge. Most Colombians long for peace but are divided over how to pursue it. Only if he can lead them into a national consensus will Pastrana finally help his country out of the abyss his father anticipated more than a decade ago. ☪

CULTURAL NORMS & NATIONAL SECURITY



PETER J. KATZENSTEIN

Cultural Norms and National Security

Police and Military in Postwar Japan

PETER J. KATZENSTEIN

New in paper! "[Katzenstein] contends that, since World War II, Japan has developed a distinctive, comprehensive, and generally nonviolent definition of security that is different from that of the United States. . . . An intriguing work well worth reading." —FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Cornell University Press

\$17.95 At bookstores,
or call (800) 666-2211
www.cornellpress.cornell.edu

Unarmed Forces

The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War

Matthew Evangelista

"Matthew Evangelista demonstrates in his well-supported and well-articulated argument that transnational relations played an important role in contributing to the demise of the Soviet threat in American thinking and to the end of the Cold War." —RAYMOND L. GARTHOFF, Brookings Institution

3 tables, 14 photos \$39.95
At bookstores, or call (800) 666-2211
www.cornellpress.cornell.edu



Cornell University Press

Chairman GRASSLEY. I will start with Mr. Aronson. Ten years ago, you were Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Could you have predicted the path that Colombia has taken, and if so, what could have been done to prevent it?

Mr. ARONSON. That is a good question, Mr. Chairman. I did not predict the path that Colombia was going to take, unfortunately. I think that, in retrospect, we focused too much on counter-narcotics to the exclusion of other issues in that country and the fundamental weakness of its democratic institutions and the huge gap between the state and large parts of the country where campesinos and rural people live.

Where the FARC operates and has operated for decades is really a place where there is no government. They are the government. They enforce the law, as they see it. They enforce justice, as they see it—it is pretty brutal. They collect taxes. There is no government.

I think that the Colombian elite and maybe the United States, to some extent, just thought that, somehow, this problem could be ignored and you could have a democratic society with its pocket of violence.

But having said that, conditions also changed, Mr. Chairman. I think the previous Colombian government, which was led by Ernesto Samper, who himself was complicit in taking narcotrafficking money, did enormous damage to this country. I think they enormously weakened the Colombian state—morally, politically, economically, and every other way—and we also, unfortunately, and I do not disagree with the decision, but by decertifying Colombia on legitimate grounds, we also isolated it at a time. Then you had an international financial crisis on top of that. So Pastrana inherited a huge crisis.

Secondly, part of the problem in Colombia is the success in Peru and Bolivia. It used to be that you did not grow coca leaf in Colombia. They were the value-added chain of the production and they did the processing and turned it into HCl. But because the coca leaf is not being grown in Peru and Bolivia because of the success of counter-narcotics efforts there, it is moving into Colombia and the guerrillas have taken advantage of that and profit from that and have become much stronger.

I think that we should have probably focused more on the political and economic and social issues of the country, and that is really part of my message today, which is those are part of this problem and part of this war that have to be addressed. I am not trying to be naive that these guerrillas are just boy scout reformers. They are not. But there are deep political roots to this issue that have to be faced if this country is going to end the war.

Chairman GRASSLEY. General McCaffrey has suggested \$500 million to Colombia. Is this too little too late or too much too soon? Were there warning signs that were ignored?

Mr. ARONSON. I think, as a country, and as I tried to say, I think we are awfully late in facing the crisis in Colombia. If you looked just a few years ago, you saw the guerrillas just rolling over the armed forces. I mean, there were some horrible defeats, including their rapid reaction battalions were just getting massacred and

their inability to have any kind of counter-response or intelligence was clear.

But I do not want to go through an exercise of pointing fingers. I think it is a good thing that we are now facing up to the problem. I do not think the issue, Mr. Chairman, is so much whether \$500 million is enough or too much but whether we develop a long-term strategy and a long-term commitment, because we have a very bad habit of getting very focused on a problem like drugs in Colombia and throwing a lot of money at it for a year or two and then we get impatient or diverted or the politics change and we go somewhere else.

These problems have been growing for 40 years in this country. They are now spilling over into our country in a serious way and into Latin America in a serious way and I think we need to join with the administration in a long-term program to help this country in all its aspects, including its armed forces, and that needs to be a multi-year commitment.

I have not looked at the numbers to say whether \$500 million. I think another key issue is how the money is spent. I think, like a lot of Latin American armies, the Colombian army was organized and trained in a very traditional way as a standing army to face a threat across its borders, which it has not faced and will not face. It has to be totally retrained and reorganized into small units and rapid reaction and close air support and a lot of things that it does not know how to do right now.

This issue Senator Graham mentioned about high school graduates being exempted from combat could not send a worse signal about who fights this war. You have peasants fighting peasants and poor people fighting poor people, and the Colombian nation as a whole has to take responsibility. The sons and daughters of the elite do not serve in the armed forces and they need to.

So I think there is a thorough strategic, kind of overall has to be made and it has to be multi-year. I have not looked at the numbers enough to give you an informed answer about the \$500 million. I assume that that is a multi-year request, but the main message I would leave, Senator, is that this has to be a long-term commitment.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Mr. Shifter, is negotiations with the insurgent groups a serious possibility or do you think that this might be a stall tactic by the insurgent groups to gain more support and particularly more funding?

Mr. SHIFTER. I think that, clearly, the record over the last year has not been—those who thought that the FARC was interested in negotiating have not been very encouraged by their behavior and conduct over the last year. I think what is essential to do is to begin to change their calculations so that they do go to negotiate seriously. I think, ultimately, they will, but they have been in a position of great strength, the government has been in a weak position, and we have to reverse that.

I think to reverse that requires attention on all fronts, including the military front, but just making the government stronger in every respect. That, I think, will change their calculations. They are pragmatic. They have interests. They want to defend their interests. They want to see a change in the country. And I think, ul-

timately, once that dynamic is changed, I think there is evidence that they will go to the bargaining table and settle politically.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Is military force going to be necessary against the insurgents from an outside force?

Mr. SHIFTER. You mean outside—

Chairman GRASSLEY. Yes.

Mr. SHIFTER. No. I think this is a Colombian responsibility. I think outside support can be helpful, but I think this is not—an outside force is not necessary and I would not—I think it could really have very negative implications.

Chairman GRASSLEY. In the past, the Colombian government had been successful in negotiating with the M-19s and other smaller insurgent groups. How has that dynamic changed now that the insurgents are involved with drug trafficking?

Mr. SHIFTER. Well, that has been the major change over the last decade or so of the military and the financial strength of the insurgents. So that clearly makes it that much more difficult, I think, to reach a settlement than with the M-19, when the M-19 was a small group, did not have the kind of resources or military might. So it was easier to incorporate them into the political system. This is going to be much more difficult. It is going to take a longer period of time because they are a more formidable force in many respects.

That is why it is essential, I think, for the State and for the government to regain the authority and capacity and their own resources and their own effectiveness, and that will, I think, change the balance. I think it will create the conditions for a productive negotiation.

Chairman GRASSLEY. Thank you.

Senator DeWine.

Senator DEWINE. I want to thank both of you for your testimony. I think it has been very, very helpful.

Mr. Aronson, you talked about the weakness of the institutions in Colombia. You have also talked about the problems with the economy. Can you, based on your experience, compare and contrast what we are seeing in Colombia versus what you saw in El Salvador and Nicaragua? At first blush, it would seem that, while there are some similarities, the economy is certainly fundamentally different. Nicaragua is still the second-poorest country in the hemisphere. El Salvador is not certainly a rich country. Per capita income is not that high. The social injustices, maybe we are just more aware of them historically in Nicaragua and El Salvador, going back many, many years.

Compare the situation in Colombia today versus El Salvador and Nicaragua. Compare and contrast. What is similar, what is dissimilar, what are the lessons that we should take from our experience and your experience in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Mr. ARONSON. I think it is a good question, Senator. Let me just try to go through the differences and similarities and maybe some lessons learned.

As far as the differences, as you point out, Colombia is a large, modern country for Latin America when Nicaragua and El Salvador are not and were not at the time of these insurgencies. In terms of geography, Colombia is almost as large as France, Ger-

many, and Italy combined. The space that President Pastrana agreed to allow the FARC to operate in is twice as large as El Salvador and the country itself is 20 times larger. There are 40 million Colombians. There are about 5.5 million Salvadorans, 3.5 million Nicaraguans.

Secondly, Colombia has been a democracy for a long time and neither Salvador nor Nicaragua were democracies when these insurgencies grew up. So I think there was more legitimacy in the early origins of these guerilla movements, even though they became Marxist-Leninists and threatened democracy itself.

Third, as General Wilhelm and others pointed out, the Sandanistas and the FMLN both relied significantly on outside support, ideologically, politically, militarily, economically. The FMLN got its weapons from the Vietnamese, from the North Koreans, and others, through the Soviets—so did the Sandanistas—and from Latin Americans, as well.

The FARC and the ELN, and it is one of the reasons they are so tough to deal with, basically have a home-grown industry, huge financial resources. They can buy very sophisticated weaponry. They are not dependent on any outside government, any outside movement, and they are very isolated. They had original origins as pro-Soviet, pro-Cuban groups, but they are very autonomous.

Third, they operate, particularly the FARC, in a part of Colombia that has sort of been isolated from the central government and the state it is a relatively—Colombia is really a country of strong regions and the central government has sort of grown in strength, but the FARC operates in a region where the government just does not exist and they are a kind of a state within a state. They have been there for a long time, and for better or for worse, they are the law and order and governmental structure.

But I think that there are some important similarities, particularly with regard to El Salvador, that I would like to stress. When we started out in El Salvador, this was part of the East/West struggle. The guerrillas were our enemy. They were the enemy of democracy. We threw a lot of resources and training and efforts into defeating them militarily and they were very hard-core Marxist-Leninists. They were not looking for reform or democratic space. They wanted to take power.

But because we were able to create a stalemate militarily, because we pressed very hard for changes within the government and the army that were needed in terms of reforms and human rights, because the world changed and the Soviet Union collapsed, there came a time when the guerrillas also changed in fundamental ways. They became willing to embrace an agenda of reform that was within a democratic system and give up their original goal of taking power through arms.

I think we need to try to create the forces and mechanisms to make that happen in Colombia. That is my one quarrel and concern with the notion that we can just defeat the FARC. It sounds good and we will all charge up the battlefield, but we will be back here in ten years and the FARC will not be defeated, even if we do everything that General Wilhelm wants. They have been there for a long time. I am not saying that we need to help the Colombians take them on and make them understand they are not going

to win militarily. I believe that strongly. But the goal ought to be to force them to the negotiating table.

One of the things I think we learned from El Salvador is we need a huge international effort to do that. It helped that the FMLN were talking to the Mexicans and talking to other Latins who were pushing them and prodding them. It helped that we talked to them, and I understand it was difficult. I got President Bush to agree to let us talk to the FMLN and the next day, they shot down a U.S. helicopter and executed two American servicemen in cold blood. Jim Baker turned to me and said, your friends have a great sense of timing.

It is not popular to do those things, but those early contacts made a difference and we built relations with the groups that were most susceptible to negotiations. I think it was a mistake when the State Department went and talked to the FARC that some members of the other body accused them of being soft on narco-guerrillas. It sounds good, but you need to start building ties to these people and bring them out of the cold, and so does the rest of the world.

The U.N. needs to be in there, and I know President Pastrana talked to the Secretary General about that, the OAS, other Latin American countries, while we do all the other things we are talking about—help the country economically, modernize their armed forces, and slowly bring these guerrillas out of the isolation in which they live.

Not all of their demands are illegitimate, and it also is important to understand one piece of history. Between 1982 and 1986, there was a peace process involving the FARC, involving the Bettencourt government, and the FARC formed a political party called the Patriotic Union and 1,000 of its members who came out of the war when there was a cease fire were massacred and shot to death by the paramilitaries and other forces. So they have a long memory, and so when we say, let us talk peace, they remember the last time they tried to talk peace. It was not a very good ending.

We are going to have to provide security guarantees and do something about the human rights situation as we take them on in the battlefield, and that is going to take time. I think Mike is right. The time will come when they will negotiate seriously and we need to be there saying the door is open to peaceful negotiations.

Senator DEWINE. Just a quick follow-up question. I appreciate your answer. You talk about the weak institutions in Colombia. What institutions are you talking about? Are you talking about geographically in the region where the guerrillas operate?

Mr. ARONSON. RIGHT.

Senator DEWINE. What else? Are we talking about the judicial system? Are we talking about what?

Mr. ARONSON. Well, I am talking first about the armed forces, which do not know how to do counter-insurgency and which high school students do not go into combat and all the things. They do not have all kinds of abilities they need, small operations, close air support, mobility, intelligence.

The judicial system, absolutely. Three percent of the people in this country who are indicted are convicted. There is a lot of corruption. That system needs to be changed.

There is no economic infrastructure in a lot of these guerilla territories, so when we are trying to say, do something besides plant coca leaves and poppies, well, there need to be roads and bridges and transport so farmers can take other kinds of crops out. There needs to be a governmental infrastructure in these countries that will take the place of the guerrillas or change sort of the nature of institutions on the ground.

There needs to be protection for journalists in this country, who are being murdered now just because they support negotiations. There need to be protections for human rights workers. Probably, I think, more work needs to be done in cleaning up the corruption in the congress of this country. The traffickers still have a lot of influence, and supporting the Colombians who are clean and honest.

So there is a kind of a long-term systemic process. But the institutions I would emphasize are the judiciary and the armed forces and the police.

Senator DEWINE. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman GRASSLEY. I have no further questions as chairman of the caucus and from my staff. You both have cooperated with us not only during this hour or so that you have been here but also in the planning. We thank you very much.

The caucus is adjourned.

Mr. ARONSON. Thank you.

Mr. SHIFTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Whereupon, at 11:41 a.m., the caucus was adjourned.]

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 1:

The focus of U.S. assistance to Colombia has been supporting counternarcotics programs. Practice as well as legal requirements in the past have made this point clearly. Is it now your view that our policy needs to change?

Answer:

No, the policy does not need to change. The insurgency is an internal problem for the Government of Colombia to address. Narcotics trafficking, on the other hand, is an international criminal problem requiring multilateral attention and cooperation. The Government of Colombia has developed a strategy to address both of these serious problems and we fully support them in their efforts.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
from Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 2:

It would seem that all this talk about the guerrillas being involved in the drug trade and the need for stepped-up action is pushing us in the direction of greater involvement in counter insurgency. Is that where we are going? What does such a shift mean for U.S. engagement in Colombia?

Answer:

U.S. policy is not shifting from cooperation with the Colombians in the regional counter-drug fight to assisting their counterinsurgency efforts. As President Clinton has stated clearly, our policy in Colombia is to support President Pastrana's efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the country's longstanding civil conflict and to work with the Colombians - along with other regional partners - on fighting illicit drugs.

The security assistance that is to be provided is intended for counternarcotics activity and we and the Colombians have extensive monitoring mechanisms to assure that this assistance will not be used for counterinsurgency operations. However, to the extent that the FARC or any of the other illegal armed groups are involved in the narcotics industry, or that they attempt to hinder

counternarcotics operations, U.S. assistance may be used appropriately to oppose them.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 3:

A recent ONDCP discussion paper all but concluded that the continued explosion of coca cultivation and increases in opium poppy cultivation in Colombia is undermining the U.S. source zone strategy. At the same time the discussion paper attempts to justify increasing the President's drug budget by almost \$1 billion to implement various enhancements to support counter-narcotics operations in the source zone, particularly in Colombia. Moreover, a June 22, 1999 GAO report on Colombia concludes that the drug threat from Colombia has worsened. According to GAO's June 22, 1999 report, the United States has provided Colombia with almost \$1 billion in counter-narcotics assistance since 1990. What do you anticipate will be achieved by spending an additional \$500 million, over and above what is already budgeted for 1999, in Colombia, since little has been achieved with the U.S. dollars already spent there?

Answer:

We do not agree that little has been achieved with the U.S. dollars already spent in Colombia. To the contrary, a great deal has been done. Over 65,000 hectares of coca and 3,012 hectares of poppies were eradicated in 1998 alone. In the same period Colombian security forces seized or destroyed the equivalent of 55 MTs of cocaine HCl and 317 MTs of heroin. All of these seized and eradicated drugs are drugs that did not find their way to the U.S.

Unfortunately, however, the rate of eradication and seizure success has not kept pace with the virtual

explosion in drug cultivation and production which is now taking place in Colombia. Just as the traffickers have adjusted to our counternarcotics airbridge success in Peru and have shifted major cultivation operations to Colombia - with new high yield coca strains and improved processing techniques - we must be just as flexible. Thus we plan to move with the GOC to take away cultivation and processing safehavens in the South, and to increase the effectiveness of GOC interdiction operations - especially in the air, and again, especially in the South. In short, while we are concerned that we have not been able to get ahead of expansion in Colombian cultivation and trafficking with our current level of counternarcotics support to the GOC. We know what works - and we just need to do more - especially boosting cooperation between all elements of the GOC security forces so that they can get the synergistic effect possible when all elements do their parts in a closely coordinated fashion.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 4:

Recently, The Government of Colombia issued a new plan for dealing with the insurgents and counter-narcotics operations. Has the U.S. marked any specific operations and activities to be funded, or will General McCaffrey's request be given without any specific requirements for expenditure?

Answer:

Note: the following answer contains information that was not available to the witness on September 21, 1999.

The additional funds we are seeking would support the GOC's "Plan Colombia" - a broad-based effort to not only attack the drug industry at its center of gravity, but also to extend GOC authority, economic growth, humanitarian assistance, and justice to all Colombians. An ambitious and comprehensive plan, it will: 1) bolster counternarcotics efforts; 2) boost Colombia's governing capacity; 3) support economic recovery; and 4) assist the peace process. Each strategy component is essential to the overall success and balance of "Plan Colombia."

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 5:

What types of assistance has the Colombian government requested from the United States? What are the specific amounts to be given to support the Counter Narcotics Police and to the Colombian military?

Answer:

Note: the following answer contains information that was not available to the witness on September 21, 1999.

Approximately \$233 million of the \$1.6 billion package will be given to support the CNP and \$825 million to the Colombian military. The bulk of the difference between the two is due to helicopters needed to provide air mobility for the army's Counternarcotics Battalions, which will act in support of the CNP's counternarcotics forces.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 6:

General McCaffrey's proposed emergency aid package contains funds for alternative development projects in Colombia. Is it realistic to propose and fund such projects while the insurgents control most of the regions where drugs are being grown?

Answer:

The State Department is already providing support to the nascent Colombian alternative development program: \$15 million over three years, beginning in FY99. The money is being used to support ambitious alternative development projects in the opium poppy cultivation region of Colombia. The program is being carefully coordinated with the aerial eradication program to ensure that the programs reinforce, rather than undercut each other.

The program provides for PLANTE, the Colombian government agency in charge of alternative development, to sign an agreement with a community in the region. In exchange for development assistance, which could be crop substitution, infrastructure development, or a mixture of both, the community agrees to abandon opium poppy cultivation voluntarily by a set deadline. If the

community meets its deadline, the CNP does not eradicate near that community. If the deadlines are not met, assistance is terminated and the CNP is called in to eradicate all illicit crops. Compliance can be monitored by CNP aerial reconnaissance.

We have so far confined our alternative development assistance to the opium poppy region because the Government of Colombia has not been able to exercise effective control over much of the coca region, due to heavy guerrilla presence. That lack of control means that the GOC also lacks the ability to effectively monitor and enforce in the coca region the community-based agreements that are central to successful alternative development. Our experience in Bolivia and Peru indicates that, without this ability to monitor and enforce, alternative development cannot succeed. Alternative development works well only when it can be paired with effective interdiction and/or eradication. We note that in Bolivia, the alternative development program did not show any real success until the Banzer government got serious about forced eradication, and in Peru alternative development's success is very much linked to the aggressive aerial interdiction program. It is also important to remember that success in Peru only began after the Shining Path had been essentially defeated.

With the additional funding requested in the Administration's proposed emergency supplemental, we hope to assist the Colombian government to regain control of the coca-growing regions of southern Colombia, so that we can expand our alternative development program into those areas as well.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 7:

Does the blurring relationship between the insurgents and the drug traffickers cause problems in deciding what types of military activities should be supported?

Answer:

The security assistance that the USG provides is intended for counternarcotics activity only, and both we and the Colombians have mechanisms in place to monitor the use of this assistance. To the extent that the FARC or any of the other illegal armed groups are involved in the narcotics industry, or that they attempt to hinder counternarcotics operations, U.S. assistance may be used appropriately to oppose them. If, on the other hand, they divest themselves of the drug trade and allow Colombian security forces to conduct their counternarcotics missions, they will have little to no contact with the counternarcotics units.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 8:

It would appear that the sketch of current plans we have for the Andean region would further downgrade transit zone interdiction. What effect will downgrading transit zone interdiction have on drug availability and price in the United States?

Answer:

Note: the following answer contains information that was not available to the witness on September 21, 1999.

Current planning for operations to disrupt narcotics trafficking within the source zone should not result in degraded transit zone operations. With the exception of AEW assets, we will be utilizing different hardware in the two zones. Thus, there will be little need for trade-offs, which could degrade transit zone operations. Through November 1999, two thirds of all aircraft patrol missions were flown in the transit zone. The goal of operations in the source zone is to minimize the amount of drugs actually flowing through the transit zone at any time, thus allowing transit zone forces to focus their assets on interdicting fewer smuggling events and achieve greater effectiveness. In fact, intelligence flowing from source zone-focused operations has led to drug seizures in the transit zone.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 9:

Would a break in the interdiction chain, as weak as critics argue the chain may be, result in a substantial increase in trafficking activity and domestic drug availability?

Answer:

Theoretically, a break in the interdiction chain would not increase trafficking activity and but might increase domestic drug availability, since it is likely that fewer drug shipments would be interdicted.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 10:

Will congressionally approved increases in military and economic assistance materially aid the Andean nations in combating drug production and trafficking?

Answer:

Yes. The Andean nations have repeatedly shown that they have sufficient political will to address these issues but lack the material resources required to follow through on their program initiatives. Financial, material, and training support from the USG is essential to these countries' efforts to combat drug production and trafficking.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 11:

If congressionally approved increases in military and economic assistance can not significantly aid the Andean nations in combating drug production and trafficking, what funding levels, or greater amounts of direct U.S. involvement, or other approaches are politically, diplomatically, and operationally feasible?

Answer:

The current programs and assistance that the USG maintains in the Andean region, aside from Colombia, are producing real returns and net reductions in cultivation. While discussion of other approaches is often useful, it would seem appropriate to continue with successful programs in those countries.

In the case of Colombia, current assistance and programs are experiencing limited success, but, obviously, more needs to be done. The Colombian government has developed a far-reaching plan, the "Plan Colombia," to address that nation's inter-related social, economic, and criminal problems. The administration, drawing on the success of programs in Bolivia and Peru, has developed a plan to support this Colombian initiative, and has asked

the Congress for additional emergency assistance to
implement it.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 12:

How will the strategy produce better results than previous strategies in reducing illicit drug use in the United States and in supporting U.S. narcotics and other foreign policy goals overseas?

Answer:

The strategy will achieve better results because it addresses the interrelated crises comprehensively instead of attacking each as an isolated issue.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 13:

Is a proper balance of resources being devoted to domestic (the demand side) vs. foreign (the supply side) components of an overall national anti-drug strategy?

Answer:

For an answer to this question, I would respectfully refer you to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, which manages the national drug control strategy. The Department of State is not involved in the domestic United States components of the strategy.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 14:

Are efforts to reduce the foreign supply level futile while domestic U.S. demand remains high?

Answer:

For an answer to this question, I would respectfully refer you to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, which manages the national drug control strategy.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 15:

What affect will Venezuela's unwillingness to allow U.S. military overflights have on detection and monitoring missions in both Southern Colombia and the source and transit zones?

Answer:

Venezuela's lack of cooperation on the overflight/hot pursuit issue goes to the heart of regional and bilateral cooperation. Since the new Venezuelan government ceased overflight cooperation in June of 1999, narco-aircraft have utilized Venezuelan airspace increasingly; the GOV has denied overflight permission to U.S. aircraft in pursuit of suspected drug traffickers on over three dozen occasions. A majority of these flights skirt Venezuela's western border with Colombia, avoiding Colombia's airspace and steering clear of the GOC's vigorous aerial interdiction efforts. This development of a new aerial corridor for drug transshipment is highly disturbing, particularly considering Venezuela's past role as a regional partner against international narcotraffickers. The GOV has not demonstrated that it can address this issue unilaterally, as the Venezuelan Air Force has successfully intercepted

only one of the over three dozen aircraft that U.S. aircraft have handed off to them. This impasse is harming our regional counternarcotics efforts and straining our bilateral relationship with Venezuela. It is in the national interest of both countries to find a mutually acceptable resolution to the overflight problem as soon as possible.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 16:

What effect does the Leahy amendment have on the ability of the United States to provide the types of assistance and training that is needed to enable the Colombian military to overcome the long-standing obstacles described in the recent GAO report?

Answer:

Legally, of course, the Leahy amendment requires that USG assistance and training not be provided to foreign security forces involved in gross human rights violations. Legal requirement aside, we completely subscribe to this objective. From a practical standpoint, section 564 of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2000 has not disrupted the delivery of assistance because the absorptive capacity of Colombia's eligible units is high. The most significant impact has been the additional work required of Embassy staff in order to follow up on alleged human rights abuses.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 17:

Are there units that either the Colombian government or the U.S. agencies have identified as potential recipients of U.S. assistance or training, but cannot receive this because of Leahy requirements?

Answer:

One unit that previously received assistance is currently suspended pending post's inquiries into two allegations of human rights abuses. Also, assistance to the second counternarcotics battalion is awaiting the conclusion of the vetting process.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 18:

There have been numerous reports of egregious human rights violations by both the guerrillas and the paramilitaries. How is the U.S. addressing these reports? How is the Government of Colombia responding?

Answer:

The Government of Colombia is responding by continued efforts to improve the security of its citizens. The United States supports the Colombian efforts to improve its capacity in this critical area by offering training and material assistance. The internal armed conflict and the social disruption caused by drug trafficking remain the greatest obstacles to democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Colombia. The U.S. Government is also very concerned about the abuses that continue to occur in Colombia. We continue to call on all combatants to move immediately to humanize the conflict by stopping all kidnapping and murders of civilians, ending the practice of recruiting child soldiers, and by abandoning attack in situations where the lives of innocent civilians are put at risk.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 19:

Currently, A-37 aircraft in Colombia are being upgraded to increase their capability given the current threat. The problem is these will not be completed until the year 2001. Are these aircraft going to be airworthy by the time upgrades are completed?

Answer:

The A-37 upgrade program has already begun in Colombia and Peru. The contractor (ARINC) has completed an extensive survey of the Colombian and Peruvian A-37 aircraft fleets, maintenance facilities, and spare parts supplies. Based on that survey, we have begun construction of upgrade kits for each aircraft, made immediate night vision improvements to Colombian and Peruvian aircraft, ordered and delivered immediate maintenance sustainment parts and purchased 17 Chilean A-37 aircraft to be used as spare parts for this program. The upgrade kits will improve the avionics, wiring systems, communication systems, night vision capability, and aircraft engines. The immediate night vision upgrades provide the Colombian and Peruvian A-37 the ability now to conduct night operations against narcotrafficking, with the complete NVIS upgrade incorporated with the upgrade kits. The spare

parts from the Chilean aircraft will allow us to extend sustainment operations to 4 to 5 years. The installation of upgrade kits will begin in June 2000 for both Colombia and Peru, and fully upgraded aircraft will become available beginning July/Aug 2000 as each kit is installed by Colombian/Peruvian mechanics with contractor oversight. In the meantime, we have begun immediate NVIS training and are working on the sustainment piece of this program. The end effect will be that these are already in better condition than when we started and fully upgraded aircraft will be airworthy for another 5-10 years.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 20:

Also, are these capabilities even going to be needed given the fact that traffickers have changed their pattern of operations?

Answer:

Traffickers are still using air methods of transportation, especially in SE Colombia as they fly cocaine HCl from the laboratory sites in the Putumayo and Caqueta to the points of embarkation along the northern and western coasts of Colombia. Air trafficking remains the most efficient and economical mean of transportation for the narcotraffickers. The upgraded A-37 aircraft in Colombia and Peru along with increased detection and monitoring and the ability to use airfields closer to the source area will make a significant difference in interdicting this air threat.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 21:

The Navy recently retired the ES-3 aircraft. Given shortfalls in adequate collection assets, would this be a suitable platform for missions in Southern Command? Have you or your staff reviewed the reactivation of the ES-3s for potential use in Southern Command? Has anyone proposed this to the Joint Staff?

Answer:

For an answer to this question, I would respectfully refer you to the Department of Defense to obtain an assessment of the suitability of an aircraft for use by Southern Command and for reports on the discussions of the Joint Staff.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999.**

Question 22:

Estimates show that the guerrilla movement is profiting from drug proceeds from anywhere between \$200 million and \$600 million. What is the current plan to address this problem before any further strengthening of the insurgency?

Answer:

It has been very difficult to obtain intelligence on the finances of the guerrilla movement. Recently, the CIA's Crime and Narcotics Center reported that actual narcotics revenue might not be as high as was earlier estimated. Still, there is no argument that the insurgents rely heavily on drug proceeds. Our strategy in Colombia calls for an integrated program of support for interdiction and eradication efforts, justice sector reform, alternative development, and institutional strengthening. While these are all intended for counternarcotics purposes, they will have positive spillover effects due to the ties that the insurgents have established with the narcotics industry.

That is why the Colombian military is increasingly interested in counternarcotics activity. The military leadership realizes that one of the best ways to attack the guerrillas is to attack their financing, in the form of

narcotics profits. The Colombian Army has greatly expanded cooperation with and support for the Colombian National Police, and formed a new counternarcotics battalion, specifically designed to work directly with the CNP on counternarcotics missions.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Charles Grassley
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 23:

Also, with profit estimates ranging from \$200 million to \$600 million, has the Administration made any effort to follow the money trail? How are the guerrillas laundering these proceeds?

Answer:

Although little is presently known concerning the money laundering methods of the insurgents in Colombia, the U.S. intelligence community continues to examine this issue. At the same time, the Administration is monitoring the money laundering transactions of the Black Market Peso Exchange (BMPE). The BMPE is one of the largest methods in the Western Hemisphere for laundering drug proceeds, with some estimates placing the amount at more than \$5 billion. A U.S. Government interagency working group has proposed the formation of a Multilateral Working Group - to be comprised of law enforcement representatives from Aruba, Colombia, Panama, Venezuela, and the U.S. - to combat the BMPE and to find effective anti-money laundering mechanisms.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Bob Graham
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 1:

This year, Colombia will receive more than \$300 million in U.S. financial assistance to disrupt narcotics trafficking activities that threaten both U.S. and Colombian national security. What are the U.S. mandated limitations and restraints attached to this funding under which Colombia must conduct its counter drug and military operations?

Answer:

All USG counternarcotics assistance to Colombia is subject to a system of end-use monitoring to ensure that it is used only for counternarcotics purposes. Also, in compliance with Section 564 of the Foreign Assistance Act, no assistance is provided to any unit of the Colombian security forces if there is even one credible allegation that the unit or any of its members have committed gross human rights violations.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Bob Graham
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 2:

What financial and operational support can Colombia anticipate from its Latin American neighbors?

Answer:

While Colombia's neighbors in South and Central America have not made pledges of financial support for Plan Colombia, all have demonstrated a willingness to work with the Pastrana administration to address what they correctly understand as a regional problem. Immediate neighbors, such as Panama and Venezuela, are understandably concerned about possible spillover effects.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Bob Graham
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 3:

Recent information indicates that, over the past five years, the Colombian coca crop has doubled. This increase in production has been linked to a number of factors including the introduction of a more productive strain of coca plant in Colombian fields and more productive processing methods that increase the overall yield of cocaine hydrochloride. Given that it takes approximately two to three years of growth before a coca plant is ready for harvest, is it not reasonable to conclude that this more productive strain of coca was introduced into Colombia at least two to three years ago? If so, were U.S. intelligence sources monitoring Colombia aware of this development and what actions were taken to address this problem?

Answer:

It is fair to say that the extent of this coca explosion is only now coming to light. This growth is centered in southern Colombia, a region dominated by insurgents. The information we are getting now is the result of improved data collection techniques and new opportunities to observe the areas in question.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Bob Graham
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 4:

INL funding supports the world's largest aerial eradication program, targeting both coca and opium grown in Colombia. You have previously described this program as the most powerful tool we have to destroy all illicit cultivation and the infrastructure which supports production of illicit drugs. Despite the efforts expended in this program, the production of coca in Colombia has doubled. The production of heroin has also increased. In light of the numbers, how can we justify the continuation of funding for aerial eradication programs in Colombia when Colombian counter drug and military forces are unable to reach the insurgent controlled areas where the majority of Colombian coca and opium are cultivated?

Answer:

Continued funding of the aerial eradication program is justified because the eradication program works. Colombian coca production has increased, but has done so in areas outside of the spray zones. Areas subject to aerial eradication, such as Guaviare, have experienced significant reductions in cultivation. As the Colombian government establishes control in insurgent areas, the eradication program will expand into those areas as well.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Bob Graham
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question B1:

With the increase in production of coca in Colombia, has there been a commensurate increase in the number of crystalline labs?

Answer:

With the increased coca cultivation in Colombia, it is reasonable to assume that there has been an increase in the number of base labs. That assumption, however, is not automatic with respect to crystalline labs: the increase in Colombian cultivation offsets the decreases in Peru and Bolivia, resulting in a change in base source, but not necessarily a significant increase in volume. At present, there is no firm estimate of the number of labs in Colombia.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Bob Graham
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question B2:

You indicated that we seem to have increased the number of labs that we have been able to eliminate. Do you have any sense of what percentage those eliminations were of the total of operating labs?

Answer:

Without a baseline figure for the number of operating labs, this would only be a guess. Evidence suggests, however, that the percentage would be low, since there does not appear to have been any significant disruption of supply.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Jeff Sessions
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 1:

Do you not agree that these Huey II helicopters are some of the most useful and economical tools that we can provide to Colombian military and police units in direct support of their counter-narcotics operations?

Answer:

The Huey II is proving to be a useful tool and it is undeniably more affordable than other, more modern helicopters. Because of this, INL is proceeding with a project to convert the entire CNP UH-1H fleet to Huey IIs. That said, however, there are physical limitations on the Huey II's capabilities, as there are with any aircraft. This is why INL is providing UH-60s to the CNP and why there are additional UH-1Ns and UH-60s in the proposed emergency supplemental package.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Bears
From Senator Jeff Sessions
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 2:

Beyond the 15 kits (which cost \$83M) currently on order, how many other Huey IIs are the Colombians requesting?

Answer:

INL and the Colombian National Police have agreed that the 10 remaining UH-1Hs should undergo the conversion to Huey II in order to complete the fleet's transformation.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Jeff Sessions
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 3:

Are additional ships being requested by either the Bolivians or the Peruvians?

Answer:

Neither Peru nor Bolivia is requesting ships from the
USG for counternarcotics purposes at this time.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Bears
From Senator Jeff Sessions
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 4:

Is support for additional purchases provided for in current plans currently under development by the administration?

Answer:

In the Administration's request for supplemental funding for Colombia and other countries in the region, there is no money budgeted for the purchase of boats for Peru or Bolivia. For Peru, however, we plan to provide training and equipment to maritime port law enforcement and civilian authorities to establish a counternarcotics control initiative. We also plan to provide fuel and spare parts maintenance funds for expanded operations of the Peruvian police and coast guard river interdiction units. In Bolivia we plan to continue to support riverine units in their counternarcotics efforts.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Jeff Sessions
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 5:

If there is a request for Emergency funding for Colombia, do you expect to ask for additional funds for counter-narcotics efforts in other countries to ensure that their efforts are not damaged by the situation in Colombia?

Answer:

The Administration has requested emergency funding for Colombia's neighbors for just that reason. In the emergency supplemental package we have included funding for counternarcotics interdiction in the following amounts: \$22M for Peru; \$6M for Bolivia; \$6M for Ecuador; and \$12M for other countries in the region, including Venezuela, Panama, Costa Rica, and Brazil. For assistance in alternative development we have requested \$15M for Peru, \$12M for Bolivia, and \$3M for Ecuador.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator Jeff Sessions
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 6:

For example, can you assure us that the Government of Bolivia will receive sufficient funding from this government to meet its stated goal of removing all coca by 2002?

Answer:

The Government of Bolivia is actually ahead of schedule in its efforts to meet the goal of eliminating all illicit coca in that country by 2002. The Administration is committed to providing Bolivia with the resources necessary to meet that goal.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator DeWine
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 1:

What is the motivation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in the peace process? Even in the best case scenario, what do you think can be accomplished by this peace process? Do these rebels want to give up their arms for peace? At what point does the current DMZ become a serious detriment to the peace process?

Answer:

Colombia has suffered from a civil conflict for almost 40 years - the longest such conflict in the hemisphere. President Pastrana has taken bold steps to advance the peace process, principally by agreeing to the creation of a FARC controlled demilitarized zone (which has been extended to June 2000). To date, however, the peace process has progressed mainly along procedural lines, and has yet to grapple with difficult, substantive issues.

The seriousness of the FARC'S commitment to the negotiations is ambiguous. The FARC have made no public statement regarding their willingness to give up their arms for peace. An additional complicating factor is that a major and increasing portion of the FARC's finances are derived from narcotics trafficking. Moreover, the FARC continues to conduct violent and bloody attacks on GOC

security forces and Colombian towns during the course of the peace discussions.

President Pastrana has made bringing an end to Colombia's civil strife a central goal of his Administration. We strongly support President Pastrana's engagement on the peace process. Not only would peace bring an end to the violence and death that plague Colombia, but it would provide a more favorable climate for economic growth and prosperity. Peace also would create better conditions for U.S. counter-narcotics efforts, as well as an end to the guerrilla-conducted kidnappings-for-profit, which have victimized nearly 100 U.S. citizens since 1980.

There is a growing perception that the GOC has made significant concessions to the FARC and has received little in return. President Pastrana recently has begun to take a harder line, publicly questioning the FARC's commitment to the process and criticizing them for their recent nationwide offensive resulting in the reported deaths of 140 people.

Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator DeWine
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999

Question 2:

Do you believe that the ruthless atrocities committed by the paramilitaries are a key reason why the FARC is at the negotiating table?

Answer:

Illegal paramilitary groups are responsible for more than 70 per cent of the extra-legal killings that occurred in Colombia this year. The U.S. strongly condemns the crimes committed against the Colombian people by these groups and urges the Colombian government to capture and punish paramilitary leaders and members.

Colombia's illegal paramilitaries have traditionally been most influential in northern Colombia, where they have aggressively challenged guerrilla groups, the ELN (Army of National Liberation) in particular, for dominance. Many have speculated that the paramilitary groups have especially hurt the ELN militarily, and that this is partially the reason the ELN seeks to enter the peace negotiations. A key demand of the FARC is for the GOC to disarm the paramilitary groups.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator DeWine
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 3:

What role has the Administration played in this peace process? Has any member of the Administration met with any member of any Colombian rebel group since the widely known meeting between Administration officials and the FARC last December 1998?

Answer:

U.S. officials have not met with the FARC since December 1998. We discontinued our contacts with the FARC following the murder of three U.S. citizens in March 1999. The USG strongly supports the Colombian peace process. We share President Pastrana's assessment that achieving a viable peace is vital to resolving Colombia's multiple, interlocking national challenges. A military solution is not possible for Colombia.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator DeWine
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 4:

How would the State Department respond if Colombia abandoned the peace process and instead focused on strengthening their infrastructure, rule of law, and military in an attempt to instill law and order in the countryside and ultimately defeat the rebel groups?

Answer:

The Government of Colombia is currently seeking to address structural weaknesses in the administration of justice through its "Plan Colombia." "Plan Colombia" is an ambitious, but realistic, package of mutually reinforcing policies to revive Colombia's battered economy, strengthen the democratic pillars of the society, promote the peace process and eliminate "sanctuaries" for narcotics producers and traffickers. The strategy combines existing GOC policies with new initiatives to forge an integrated approach to resolving Colombia's most pressing national problems. The U.S. fully supports President Pastrana's initiative.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator DeWine
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 5:

What is the State Department doing about the three American missionaries who were murdered by FARC rebels this year? How many Americans the FARC or other groups are currently holding captive?

Answer:

Note: The following answer contains information that was not available to the witness on September 21, 1999.

The bodies of three American citizens (Terence Freitas, Ingrid Washinawatok, and Lahe'ena'e Gay) working with the U'Wa Indians in Northeastern Colombia were recovered in March 1999 in Venezuelan territory adjacent to the Colombian border. The FARC has admitted publicly that some of its members were responsible for the kidnapping and murders of the three indigenous rights workers.

The USG has demanded a complete investigation by law enforcement entities. In particular, the investigation needs to identify all those responsible for the murder of the three U.S. activists. We have insisted that the Government of Venezuela and the Government of Colombia identify and prosecute those individuals responsible for this heinous crime. Both governments have been receptive

to our requests and are pursuing efforts to bring those responsible to justice.

Six Amcit hostage cases remain unsolved. The most recent victim is Matthew Burchell, a helicopter mechanic working for a U.S. company that has a subcontract with a contractor for BP-Amoco. Burchell was kidnapped by the ELN on May 13, 1999 in Yopal, Casanare Department. Ransom negotiations continue between the ELN and Burchell's employer.

Dual U.S./Colombian citizen Vicente Rafael Diaz was kidnapped April 3 in Bogota, when police impersonators pulled his car over, handcuffed him and took him away. Diaz's wife and father-in-law in Panama have been contacted by the kidnappers, who have demanded a \$1.8 million ransom. This kidnapping appears to be for criminal rather than political motives.

Dual U.S./Colombian citizen Pablo Felipe Jaramillo, age 15, was kidnapped March 23 as he and his younger brother were being driven to school by the family chauffeur. The kidnappers released the other child and the chauffeur and took Pablo. The car was later found abandoned in FARC territory. The kidnappers have demanded a \$1.25 million ransom. It does not appear that he was kidnapped because of his U.S. nationality.

On January 31, 1993, the FARC kidnapped three U.S. citizens (David Mankins, Mark Rich, and Richard Tenenoff) who were working with the New Tribes Mission (NTM) in Panama. It is believed that the kidnappers took the three men across the border to Colombia. There has been no positive proof of life since December 1993, and efforts continue to determine the fate and whereabouts of these individuals. From October 12-14, 1999, Colombian military and forensic experts excavated an area near the Rio Murri, where an informant had said the New Tribes Mission members were buried. The search turned up no evidence of any remains. Following a second tip, the Colombian military excavated another area in northwest Colombia March 16 and uncovered some bone fragments and clothing remnants, which are currently being analyzed to see if they belonged to any of the missing NTM members. Colombia authorities continue to investigate other leads as they develop. The USG continues to call on the FARC to provide a full accounting of the whereabouts and status of these missionaries.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator DeWine
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 6:

Human rights groups have been critical of Colombian military links to the paramilitaries. They claim that while we focus on the FARC and ELN threats, we don't place much of an emphasis in urging the Colombian government to develop a plan to counter their threat. What can the U.S. do to urge the Colombian government to develop such a strategy?

Answer:

The current leadership of the Colombian military has ordered that the paramilitaries be pursued by the security forces with the same vigor they pursue the guerrillas. We believe that, for the most part, the Colombian military and police are making an effort to carry out this order. Several high-ranking officers have been removed from command and/or forcibly retired in the last year because of allegations of involvement with the paramilitaries, or failure to defend civilian lives from paramilitary attacks.

As a matter of policy, the Colombian armed forces and police have taken on the mission of confronting the paramilitaries and bringing them to justice, in order to preserve the state's legitimate monopoly on the use of force. We are, however, aware of credible reports that on

an individual level some members of the Colombian military, especially the Colombian army, are sympathetic to the paramilitary movement and either cooperate with them or (more frequently) fail to take any action against them. We have reported this in our annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Colombia for the past several years. There are even reports that some members of the Colombian army also serve with paramilitary units.

The USG has supported President Pastrana in his efforts to force the Colombian military to sever its ties to the paramilitaries, and we applaud the steps that have been taken thus far. We continue at every opportunity to emphasize our concern that more be done to completely eliminate this problem.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator DeWine
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 7:

What is the status of an assistance package for Colombia? What is the timing? What will it include? What are the State Department objectives in terms of the assistance? What can we expect to accomplish? Do you envision this assistance package as a one shot deal? Will the package include assistance for any other countries other than Colombia?

Question 8:

What is the State Department's short term and long term strategy with regards to Colombia? What are the goals? What do we hope to accomplish?

Answer:

Note: The following answer contains information not available to the witness on September 21, 1999.

Since taking office in August 1998, President Pastrana has launched bold initiatives aimed at ending Colombia's civil conflict, re-invigorating its economy, modernizing governmental institutions, and combating narcotics traffickers.

The U.S. has an important stake in President Pastrana's success in overcoming Colombia's national challenges, especially the growing drug production that is a direct threat to our national security. Illegal narcotics threaten our children and corrupt our society;

terrorists kidnap and murder our people; guerrillas and narcotics traffickers attack and extort U.S. businesses.

President Pastrana's "Plan Colombia" is a blueprint of far-reaching, interlocking policies. Of special importance to the U.S. is the plan's aggressive strategy to combat narcotics trafficking. Plan Colombia will cost about \$7.5 billion over the next three years and Colombia proposes to spend \$4 billion of its own scarce resources in that plan. The Pastrana Administration is asking the international community to provide the remaining \$3.5 billion.

In support of these goals, the Clinton administration has proposed a two-year, \$1.6 billion request to Congress for additional funding to enhance our bilateral assistance programs for Colombia. This increased assistance will be directed to counter-drug efforts and other critical programs to help President Pastrana deepen democracy and promote peace and prosperity. This assistance will include \$240 million over two years to alternative development, enhancing good governance, anticorruption, and human rights.

**Question for the Record submitted to
INL Assistant Secretary Rand Beers
From Senator DeWine
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
September 21, 1999**

Question 9:

Various new reports have highlighted the potential threat the Colombian crisis poses to the region. Do you think the Colombia crisis is a serious threat to our regional stability?

Answer:

Colombia's internal civil conflict has plagued the country for almost 40 years and has routinely spilled over into Colombia's neighbors. Much as the guerrillas and paramilitaries have systematically demonstrated their contempt towards Colombia's law, they too have shown similar disregard to the laws and lives of Colombia's neighbors. While we do not believe that the situation in Colombia poses an imminent threat to stability in the region or to Panama Canal operations, it cannot be left to fester undisturbed. Assistance to Colombia now may obviate the need to deal with a larger regional problem later.

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR GRASSLEY
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.1
PAGE 1 OF 1

Questions From General Charles Wilhelm

ASSISTANCE RESTRICTIONS DUE TO LEAHY REQUIREMENTS

SENATOR GRASSLEY: Are there units that either the Colombian government or U.S. agencies have identified as potential recipients of U.S. assistance or training, but that cannot receive this because of Leahy requirements?

GENERAL WILHELM: We know of no units that have been nominated for assistance and were subsequently disqualified based on Leahy requirements. The Colombian Armed Forces are aware of the requirements, know that we monitor them closely, and cooperate fully in the vetting process.

We will continue to strictly adhere to these requirements during future and possibly expanded engagement with the Colombian Armed Forces.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR GRASSLEY
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.2
PAGE 1 OF 1

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

SENATOR GRASSLEY: There have been numerous reports of egregious human rights violations by both the guerrillas and the paramilitaries. How is the U.S. addressing these reports? How is the Government of Colombia responding?

GENERAL WILHELM: The Department of State Human Rights Report on Colombia for 1998 and preliminary reports for 1999 clearly state that paramilitary and guerrilla forces were responsible for the majority of extrajudicial killings in 1998-1999.

We are addressing these reports in three key areas. First, we continue to emphasize that Colombian security forces must not aid, abet, or tolerate any human rights violations by the paramilitary or guerrilla forces. Second, we emphasize the importance of human rights in accomplishing their assigned missions. To reinforce that policy, all Department of Defense (DoD) military courses taught to Colombians contain a section on Human Rights. Finally, our legal engagement programs with Colombia are centered on establishing a Uniformed Code of Military Justice, which will be effective, efficient and transparent in prosecuting all violators.

The Government and the Security Forces in Colombia have taken several positive steps to respond to violations. Four generals have been dismissed, retired early, or imprisoned for failure to protect civilians from paramilitary attacks. To ensure their forces act appropriately, they also recently produced a handbook on Human Rights that serves as a basis on how to recognize, report, and deal with suspected human rights violations and have an ambitious plan to provide Human Rights training to all their security forces. Additionally, building on recent successes, Colombia must enjoin its security forces to aggressively pursue, confront, and engage paramilitary forces who are responsible for the lion's share of human rights violations.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR GRAHAM
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.3
PAGE 1 OF 1

SURVEILLANCE ASSETS

SENATOR GRAHAM: Has SOUTHCOM been provided with sufficient technical surveillance assets to successfully complete its mission in Colombia?

GENERAL WILHELM: [DELETED]

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR GRAHAM
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.4
PAGE 1 OF 1

COLOMBIAN ARMED FORCES REFORM

SENATOR GRAHAM: What is the U.S. military's assessment of the organizational and operational reforms that must be made within the various branches of the Colombian armed forces to ensure the efficient completion of its military and counter drug responsibilities? How does the recently released Colombian plan address these necessary reforms? How does the U.S. ensure that these necessary reforms are completed?

GENERAL WILHELM: Colombia must make additional organizational and operational reforms in the areas of intelligence collection and analysis, tactical mobility and direct attack (small unit training, light infantry airborne and airmobile operations), communications security, command and control, and indirect fire weapons proficiency. Operationally, Colombia must also create adequate infrastructure and government presence throughout the entire country and provide the requisite forward military infrastructure to support its isolated bases.

The recently released Colombian plan does an excellent job in identifying the Colombian government's key objectives. It calls for forces tailored and equipped to meet threats to national security and reapportions forces as required to create a more robust Counterdrug (CD) capability. The strategy emphasizes offensive operations while maintaining essential defense requirements and the development of a more professional, predominantly volunteer force. The Colombians have already implemented several organizational and operational reforms: A CD Battalion and a Joint Intelligence Center are being trained and equipped for operations by 15 December, and Air Force/airlift capability is being improved. The Colombian Marine Corps riverine program, comprised of 24 Riverine Combat Elements (RCE), is getting results. The Colombians plan to add an additional 30 RCE's by 2005. The next step in the process is an assessment of the ongoing reforms and an action plan to address any additional requirements.

SOUTHCOM will ensure the necessary reforms are completed with the Colombian military via Military Group assessments, training evaluations, and other Military to Military engagement opportunities. Other Colombian government agencies will be assessed through our national interagency process.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR GRAHAM
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.5
PAGE 1 OF 1

AIRBORNE RECONNAISSANCE LEVELS

SENATOR GRAHAM: It is my understanding that your airborne reconnaissance overflights have dropped by approximately 85% from 1990 levels. Is this correct, and if it is, what impact has it had on source country intelligence collection?

GENERAL WILHELM: Your assessment is correct. Although our records are incomplete for 1990, we know that in 1992 we flew 174 intelligence missions per month, and in fiscal year 1999 we averaged just under 26 missions per month. The difference between these numbers represents an 85 percent reduction. Furthermore, most of the 1992 sorties were flown by aircraft stationed in the theater, such as the U-2, Senior Scout, Guardrail, and Pacer Coin. Today, there are no reconnaissance aircraft stationed in USSOUTHCOM's Area of Responsibility.

[DELETED.] We also had inadequate airborne resources to determine damage following Hurricanes Georges and Mitch, and the Colombian earthquake.

The reduction of airborne intelligence capability is only part of the theater Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) problem. We expect only about a fifth of our intelligence to come from airborne collectors. The balance should come from other national and theater intelligence collectors. Those assets have also been reduced, to the point where we are receiving approximately one third of all the intelligence we require.

CL By: SCJ2
CL Reason: 1.5 (A) & (C)
DECL On: X1

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR SESSIONS
 GENERAL WILHELM
 SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
 Q.6a
 PAGE 1 OF 1

HUEY II HELICOPTERS

SENATOR SESSIONS: It is my understanding that refitted UH 1 helicopters are essential for counter-drug operations throughout Central and South America providing police and military units mobility, as well as aerial reconnaissance and surveillance capability during direct action eradication and other types of counter-drug operations. In essence Huey II's are essential assets if the war on drugs is to be prosecuted at the origin of the drugs in the remote areas of Colombia and elsewhere.

Colombian military and police forces urgently need reliable, low cost Huey II helicopters. These upgraded ships are combat proven, extremely proven at higher altitudes (12,000 ft) given the increased performance of their two engines, and are 41% less expensive in maintenance costs.

Ungraded Huey II helicopters fit the model that counter-narcotics forces in Colombia need to execute efficient operations. Seven (7) Huey II kits cost the same as 1 UH 60 Blackhawk, and allow us to field a cost effective airframe in less time to troops that need the resource.

Do you agree that these Huey II helicopters are some of the most useful and economical tools that we can provide to Colombian military and police units in direct support of their Counter-narcotics operations?

GENERAL WILHELM: The Huey II aircraft is effective to 8,000 feet, carrying either eight soldiers or up to 1,700 pounds of cargo. The Huey II upgrade to the UH-1H, with improved engine, is well suited for a variety of missions in Colombia's counternarcotics effort. It has an excellent record of maintainability and sustainability in operations conducted by both police and military units. The aircraft, in our judgment, is a cost and mission effective aircraft, for many, but not all of Colombia's needs.

The Colombian Ministry of Defense recently developed a comprehensive, internal counterdrug strategy. Given the problems Colombia faces and the force requirements necessary to meet the strategy, Colombia needs to choose the helicopter package that best works for them.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR SESSIONS
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.6b
PAGE 1 OF 1

HUEY II COLOMBIAN REQUEST

SENATOR SESSIONS: Beyond the 15 kits (which cost 483M) currently on order, how many other Huey II's are the Colombians requesting?

GENERAL WILHELM: The Department of State has an ongoing program with the Colombian National Police (CNP) to upgrade twenty-five UH-1H helicopters of the CNP's fleet to the Huey II configuration. Although we have not received formal requests for additional Huey II's, the Government of Colombia is considering further acquisitions of the aircraft kits for the CNP in its strategic planning for counternarcotics support.

The Colombian Air Force, through direct commercial sales, upgraded eight of its UH-1Hs to Huey IIs. We have not received any other requests for Huey II upgrades from the Colombian Army or Air Force.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR SESSIONS
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.6c
PAGE 1 OF 1

HUEY II BOLIVIAN OR PERUVIAN REQUEST

SENATOR SESSIONS: Are additional ships being requested by either the Bolivians or the Peruvians?

GENERAL WILHELM: Neither Bolivia nor Peru has formally requested additional Huey II aircraft. However, both governments have shown an interest in either acquisition of Huey II's or upgrade of portions of their current fleet of UH-1's to Huey II's.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR SESSIONS
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.6d
PAGE 1 OF 1

SUPPORT FOR ADDITIONAL HUEY II's

SENATOR SESSIONS: Is support for additional purchases provided for in current plans currently under development by the Administration?

GENERAL WILHELM: Funding for additional Huey II's has been included in discussions of counternarcotics-related supplemental assistance to Colombia and other source-zone countries. Numbers and dollar figures are not currently available.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR SESSIONS
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.7a
PAGE 1 OF 1

SHIP BASED HELICOPTERS

SENATOR SESSIONS: General, the Navy is transitioning its Naval Reserve combat helicopter assets in the near term. This may mean that some of the ships supporting your counter drug operations, both in the Pacific and Atlantic theaters, would not have helicopters to deploy.

How important are ship based helicopters to your counter drug operation?

GENERAL WILHELM: Ship based helicopters are vital to effective counterdrug operations in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific. In concert with the ship to which they are assigned, the helicopters become force multipliers. They provide greatly extended visual and radar coverage, night detection and tracking capability with Forward Looking Infrared Radar (FLIR) sensors, and the critical ability to acquire and close on highly evasive and maneuverable Go Fast vessels.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR SESSIONS
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.7b
PAGE 1 OF 1

AIR ASSETS

SENATOR SESSIONS: What alternative do you have if you do not have these air assets at sea?

GENERAL WILHELM: We do not have an effective alternative to ship based helicopters. Our limited numbers of land based Maritime Patrol Aircraft cannot provide the required coverage to cue the ships conducting counterdrug (CD) operations. Additionally, land based aircraft do not provide the required flexibility or immediate responsiveness to effectively engage targets of opportunity that frequently characterize maritime CD operations.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR SESSIONS
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.7c
PAGE 1 OF 1

SHIP/HELICOPTER ASSETS

SENATOR SESSIONS: Have the ship/helicopter assets proved valuable in the past in conducting these operations?

GENERAL WILHELM: Yes. The majority of maritime vessel interdictions are a direct result of coordinated operations between U.S. Navy/U.S. Coast Guard ships and their assigned helicopters. The ship-based helicopters provide the long-range cueing our ships require to intercept drug trafficking vessels. During this fiscal year, a total of 36 go fast and other drug trafficking vessels were captured or destroyed, resulting in the seizure of over 40 metric tons of illegal drugs in the Transit Zone.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR DEWINE
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.8
PAGE 1 OF 1

FARC NEGOTIATION

SENATOR DEWINE: In your opinion, what has brought the FARC to the negotiation table? Do you think the paramilitary threat has played a role in this?

GENERAL WILHELM: The FARC have not come to the negotiating table. Their goal is to gain as many concessions from the Government of Colombia (GOC) as possible while avoiding serious negotiations. To date, the FARC have made no significant concessions while the GOC has ceded a Switzerland-size portion of Colombia (the Despeje) to the FARC. FARC negotiating tactics prompted the Colombian government to alter its initial demand for an "International Verification Commission" to monitor FARC actions in the Despeje.

In order for serious negotiations to take place, the Government of Colombia must bargain from a position of strength. The necessary leverage can only be gained through battlefield successes by the Colombian military. Tactical defeats suffered by government security forces at the hands of the FARC in recent years have emboldened the FARC and provided little incentive for them to engage in meaningful or substantive peace negotiations with the GOC. However, I have been encouraged by the performance of Colombian security forces during the FARC's countrywide July offensive and in subsequent engagements. Recently, government forces have inflicted substantial losses on the FARC, and we saw encouraging levels of cooperation and coordination among the Colombian Armed Forces (COLAF) and Colombian National Police (CNP). To improve the GOC's position at the negotiating table, the armed forces must continue to upgrade their combat capabilities and sustain recently observed trends of improved performance on the battlefield. Tactical battlefield successes will drive the FARC to serious, meaningful negotiations with the GOC.

The paramilitary issue is significant; the FARC and the GOC will have to resolve the status of the paramilitary forces before a peace agreement can be concluded. The FARC will not agree to disarm if the GOC cannot assure their safety from paramilitary forces. On the other hand, pressuring the GOC to act against the paramilitaries serves the FARC's military interests by diverting GOC counterinsurgency efforts away from them and toward their enemies. The FARC will also use the paramilitary issue to delay peace negotiations while attempting to obtain further concessions from the GOC.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR DEWINE
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.9
PAGE 1 OF 1

FARC ASSESSMENT

SENATOR DEWINE: What is your assessment of the FARC with regard to funding, capability, organization, and command structure? How does this compare with other rebel forces that you've studied over the years in Latin America or anywhere else? How does the FARC differ? Strengths? Weaknesses?

GENERAL WILHELM: The FARC is a well-organized, well equipped highly capable insurgent organization. While it also has a well-defined command structure, the efficiency of this structure is questionable. The most significant difference between the FARC and other insurgent groups is their self-sufficiency and financial solvency. FARC strengths are their ability to launch large scale attacks with no warning, well established supply networks, extensive Human Intelligence (HUMINT) networks that provide detailed information on security forces, and longevity of the senior leadership. The most significant weaknesses of the FARC are their vulnerability to close air support, general lack of widespread popular support, and poor training given to new recruits.

Estimates of FARC income in 1998 range from \$150 million to over \$400 million (U.S. dollars). They derive this income through extortion and kidnapping of local and international citizens and businesses, and "taxing" of the drug trade. The FARC is unusual among guerrilla organizations because they are not financed by foreign governments or organizations.

Estimates of FARC strength range from 10,000 to 17,000. [DELETED.] While the FARC is capable of manufacturing improvised mortars, explosive devices, and ammunition for mortars, [DELETED.]

The FARC is a vertically structured organization with a seven-member Secretariat, led by Manuel Marulanda. Nominally subordinate to the Secretariat is the General Staff, composed of 23 members, including the members of the Secretariat. [DELETED] Blocs form an informal layer between the General Staff and the [DELETED] Fronts of the FARC. FARC Fronts are responsible for their area of operations, usually defined geographically. [DELETED.]

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SENATOR DEWINE
GENERAL WILHELM
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999
Q.12
PAGE 1 OF 1

AIRBORNE RECONNAISSANCE LOW SYSTEM

SENATOR DEWINE: As the Commander in Chief of Southern Command, you must have a great appreciation for the significant contribution that airborne reconnaissance platforms make in fighting the drug war in Colombia. Specifically, the US Army's Airborne Reconnaissance Low (ARL) system has a record in providing timely intelligence in support of the drug war throughout the Southern Command area of responsibility. The crash of the ARL aircraft on July 23, 1999 in Colombia was tragic in the loss of lives as well as of this valuable asset. What is the impact of the loss of this ARL system and does it need to be replaced?

GENERAL WILHELM: [DELETED.]

The imagery ARL satisfied a critical capability in our intelligence architecture. The ARL's imagery sensors, coupled with its ability to carry host nation riders, to downlink images in near-real time, and to produce imagery releasable to host nation and civilian personnel made it a significant contributor to the drug war. The ARL is also a key intelligence resource for other USSOUTHCOM missions.

The ARL must be replaced. The system was developed and fielded by the U.S. Army to support an urgent USSOUTHCOM requirement for 12 low profile intelligence aircraft. The ARL program was only funded for eight aircraft.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions From Brian Sheridan

Senator Charles Grassley
Chairman, Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
Questions for the Record

- Q1. The focus of U.S. assistance to Colombia has been on supporting counter-narcotics programs. Practice as well as legal requirements in the past have made this point clearly. Is it now your view that our policy needs to change?
- A. Military assistance provided by the Department of Defense should continue to focus squarely on supporting Colombian counter-narcotics programs. There is no need to change our policy and the Department has no plans to do so.
- Q2. It would seem that all this talk about the guerrillas being involved in the drug trade and the need for stepped-up action is pushing us in the direction of greater involvement in counter insurgency. Is that where we are going? What does such a shift mean for US engagement in Colombia?
- A. The Department is not engaged in counter-insurgency operations in Colombia and does not plan to do so. The Department will continue, where congressionally authorized, to train and equip both the Colombian National Police and the Colombian Military to more effectively conduct counter-narcotics operations. This support is provided to Colombian government units that will be or are operating in the drug producing and trafficking regions and conduct counterdrug missions.
- Q3. A recent ONDCP discussion paper all but concluded that the continued explosion of coca cultivation and increases in opium poppy cultivation in Colombia is undermining the U.S. source zone strategy. At the same time the discussion paper attempts to justify increasing the President's drug budget by almost \$1 billion to implement various enhancements to support counter-narcotics operations in the source zone, particularly in Colombia. Moreover, a June 22, 1999 GAO report on Colombia concludes that the drug threat from Colombia has worsened. According to GAO's June 22, 1999 report, the United States has provided Colombia with almost \$1 billion in counter-narcotics assistance since 1990. What do you anticipate will be achieved by spending an additional \$500 million, over and above what is already budgeted for 1999, in Colombia, since little has been achieved with the U.S. dollars already spent there?
- A. It is anticipated that increased assistance will have the combined effect of increasing interdiction efficiency while simultaneously supporting the Colombian government's newfound political will to address long-standing domestic problems. The government of Colombia, under the leadership of President Pastrana, has formulated a comprehensive

strategy to coordinate the counter-narcotics activities of its combined forces. These events have created an environment that the Department feels is more conducive to effective counter-drug operations. Therefore, the time is right to increase the magnitude, but not the scope, of counter-drug training and assistance for both the Colombian military and the National Police.

- Q4. Recently, the Government of Colombia issued a new plan for dealing with the insurgents and counter-narcotics operations. Has the U.S. marked any specific operations and activities to be funded, or will General McCaffrey's request be given without any specific requirements for expenditure?
- A. The Administration's response to the Government of Colombia's request is currently being reviewed.
- Q5. What types of assistance has the Colombian government requested from the United States? What are the specific amounts to be given to support the Counter Narcotics Police and to the Colombian military?
- A. The Colombian Government has asked the Department of Defense to provide training, infrastructure improvements, fuel, intelligence support, and equipment to support their security forces (Colombian National Police and Military) involved in counternarcotics detection, monitoring, and interdiction operations. DoD provided approximately \$65M in FY99 to Colombia to support the Colombian Military and National Police's counterdrug efforts. No specific amount of future year funding has been discussed with the Colombian Government at this time.
- Q6. General McCaffrey's proposed emergency aid package contains funds for alternative development projects in Colombia. Is it realistic to propose and fund such projects while the insurgents control most of the regions where drugs are being grown?
- A. Yes. The role of alternative development is primarily a State Department and U.S. AID issue. However, the Department of Defense believes that U.S. Government assistance must complement and support President Pastrana's "Plan Colombia" which addresses the wide range of social, political, and economic problems that currently plague Colombia. Alternative development is an instrumental part of this integrated plan.

- Q7. Does the blurring relationship between the insurgents and the drug traffickers cause problems in deciding what types of military activities should be supported?**
- A. No. The training and assistance being provided to combined Colombian forces, under congressional authorization, is specifically designed to support counter-narcotics operations. While some of the basic training provided to these units will enhance their ability to conduct broader scope military operations, the Colombian forces, both military and National Police, that receive this instruction will be operating in drug production and trafficking regions, conducting counter-narcotics missions.**
- Q8. It would appear that the sketch of current plans we have for the Andean region would further downgrade transit zone interdiction. What effect will downgrading transit zone interdiction have on drug availability and price in the United States?**
- A. Plans to enhance source zone capabilities do not come at the expense of transit zone capabilities.**
- Q9. Would a break in the interdiction chain, as weak as critics argue the chain may be, result in a substantial increase in trafficking activity and domestic drug availability?**
- A. The link between drug interdiction and availability is a contentious issue which is continuously debated. While the Department of Defense can not authoritatively comment on the extended domestic impact of a scaled back interdiction effort, it is reasonable to assume that the near term effect would be that much of the roughly 100 metric tons of cocaine that is seized annually prior to reaching our borders would instead enter the U.S. and find its way into the domestic distribution network, thereby increasing availability.**
- Q10. Will congressionally approved increases in military and economic assistance materially aid the Andean nations in combating drug production and trafficking?**
- A. Yes. Blending military and economic assistance makes a material difference. The Andean nations need help improving their technical capabilities to detect, monitor, and interdict illegal drug activity. Their successful drug interdiction activities pave the way for long-term solutions: economic development.**

- Q11. If congressionally approved increases in military and economic assistance can not significantly aid the Andean nations in combating drug production and trafficking, what funding levels, or greater amounts of direct U.S. involvement, or other approaches, are politically, diplomatically, and operationally feasible?
- A. Agencies other than DoD have the primary responsibility to shape the political, economic, and diplomatic aspects of US foreign policy. DoD responds to requests from international and domestic law enforcement authorities and uses its unique capabilities to increase the ability of our regional partners to detect, monitor, and interdict illegal drug activity. Our Andean Ridge partners have demonstrated tremendous resolve to interdict illegal narcotics trafficking. However, without assistance they possess insufficient means to succeed. Based upon the resources and authority available, the Department supports counterdrug operations that fit within the given political, diplomatic, and economic framework.
- Q12. How will the strategy produce better results than previous strategies in reducing illicit drug use in the United States and in supporting U.S. narcotics and other foreign policy goals overseas?
- A. This strategy builds on the lessons learned from previous efforts and acknowledges the changing political environment in Colombia. From a broader foreign policy perspective, this strategy supports the initiative of a host government, which builds trust and thereby enhances our ability to engage other governments on challenging issues of mutual interest. With respect to illicit drug use in the U.S., this strategy should reduce the availability of cocaine and Colombian produced heroin in this country, which will make these drugs more difficult to obtain.
- Q13. Is a proper balance of resources being devoted to domestic (the demand side) vs. foreign (the supply side) components of an overall national anti-drug strategy?
- A. The Department of Defense firmly supports the National Drug Control Strategy and believes that both demand and supply reduction efforts are instrumental in reducing drug abuse in the U.S. However, outside of our own extremely successful demand reduction program, the Department has no direct role in the execution of domestic demand reduction programs and is not in a position to make a definitive assessment of the level of effort -- or balance -- that should be ascribed to each component.

Q14. Are efforts to reduce the foreign supply level futile while domestic U.S. demand remains high?

A. No. Our supply reduction efforts remove tons of cocaine from the pipeline. That cocaine would end up on our streets. Second, our efforts bolster the law enforcement and judicial institutions of foreign governments, making them more effective in their counterdrug efforts and less vulnerable to corruption.

Q15. What effect will Venezuela's unwillingness to allow U.S. military overflights have on detection and monitoring missions in both Southern Colombia and the source and transit zones?

A. While the lack of overflight reduces P-3 and AWACS on station time in the source zone by approximately one and one-half hours, the overall strategic impact from a detection and monitoring perspective has not been overly significant. What has been impacted is our ability to conduct hot pursuits over Venezuelan air space, which has provided a safe haven for drug smugglers on returning flights from the Caribbean. This has impacted the ability of law enforcement agencies and Colombian government to conduct effective end game operations.

Q16. What effect does the Leahy amendment have on the ability of the United States to provide the types of assistance and training that is needed to enable the Colombian military to overcome the long-standing obstacles described in the recent GAO report?

A. As a result of the Leahy Amendment, there are certain units of the Colombian military we are unable to provide training to.

Q17. Are there units that either the Colombian government or U.S. agencies have identified as potential recipients of U.S. assistance or training, but that cannot receive this because of Leahy requirements?

A. THIS QUESTION WILL BE ANSWERED BY U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND.

Q18. There have been numerous reports of egregious human rights violations by both the guerillas and the paramilitaries. How is the U.S. addressing these reports? How is the Government of Colombia responding?

A. THIS QUESTION WILL BE ANSWERED BY U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND.

- Q19. Currently, A-37 aircraft in Colombia are being upgraded to increase their capability given the current threat. The problem is these will not be completed until the year 2001. Are these aircraft going to be airworthy by the time the upgrades are completed?
- A. Yes. The upgrades and training programs, along with support infrastructure (spares) development will start in early FY00. When the program is fully implemented in late FY00/01, the A-37 aircraft's operational life will be extended five to seven years (including a U.S. sustainment assistance period of two plus years.)
- Q20. Also, are these capabilities even going to be needed given the fact that traffickers have changed their pattern of operations?
- A. Air movement, of both base and processed cocaine, within Colombia is the most critical aspect of the entire cocaine industry. Aerial interdiction in southeastern Colombia with A-37 aircraft is essential to addressing this problem. It is unlikely that the traffickers will alter their current airborne smuggling pattern until they are confronted with a credible air interdiction program, centered on the A-37.
- Q21. The Navy recently retired the ES-3 aircraft. Given the shortfalls in adequate collection assets, would this be a suitable platform for missions in Southern Command? Have you or your staff reviewed the reactivation of the ES-3's for potential use in Southern Command? Has anyone proposed this to the Joint Staff?
- A. This option has been researched by the Navy, reviewed by OSD, and discussed with the Joint Staff. It has been determined not to be cost effective. It would require \$5 to \$14 million (dependent upon individual airframe configuration) and 18 months to remove and refurbish a squadron of four ES-3A aircraft from "mothballs." Annual operating cost would amount to an additional \$17 to \$20 million. The squadron would require over 150 military personnel that are not currently reflected in overall Navy end strength. Furthermore, contracts for spares and repair parts would have to be re-started while many of the collection systems on the aircraft are either unnecessary for counterdrug operations or are obsolete.
- Q22. Estimates show that the guerrilla movement is profiting from drug proceeds from anywhere between \$200 and \$600 million. What is the current plan to address this problem before any further strengthening of the insurgency?
- A. The best means available to the Department to assist in reducing the guerrilla's drug proceeds is to enhance the combined Colombian forces ability to conduct effective counternarcotics operations. This reduces the supply of funds available to

counterinsurgent groups. The Department's Colombian assistance programs are focused solely on supporting improving the counternarcotics capabilities of the combined Colombian forces.

- Q23. Also, with profit estimates ranging from \$200 to \$600 million, has the Administration made any effort to follow the money trail? How are the guerrillas laundering these proceeds?
- A. The National Drug Control Strategy, under Goal 5: Break Foreign and Domestic Drug Sources of Supply, has a specific objective designed to deter money laundering and pursue anti-money laundering investigations. This not an issue on which the Department of Defense is qualified to make an assessment. The Department of Justice would be better able to address these issues.

Senator Mike DeWine
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
Questions for the record

- Q1a. Despite our continuous efforts, coca and poppy cultivation has been on the rise in Colombia. What do you believe is the reason for this increase?
- A. Continued US and international demand for the product coupled with successful aerial interdiction operations in Peru set the conditions that made the cultivation of coca a profitable "industry" in Colombia. The corresponding deterioration in the Colombian Government's ability to effectively control its territory, especially in the Putumayo region, inhibited Colombia's ability to conduct effective interdiction operations, which has resulted in the net increase in coca cultivation.
- Q1b. Are you concerned that a continuing DMZ may have an effect on increase coca cultivation and/or production?
- A. Yes. The DMZ has been used for all facets of narco-trafficking: production, consumption, transportation, money laundering, arms trafficking, and precursor chemicals trafficking. However, the main areas of Colombian coca cultivation areas lay outside of the DMZ in the Putumayo and Caqueta regions.
- Q1c. What can the United States do to help increase the reduction of cultivation of illicit drug crops?
- A. Reduce US demand. This objective, along with successful interdiction and eradication efforts, alternative crop development, and long-term economic opportunities for the effected populations will help to reduce cultivation.
- Q2. What do you believe are the short falls of the current Colombia military in terms of capabilities?
- A. The Colombian military lacks the ability to project and sustain combined arms operations for extended periods of time throughout their country. Specific weaknesses include a general lack of airborne mobility, insufficient logistical infrastructure to support sustained operations, and a low ratio of combat vs. support personnel.

- Q3a. Human rights groups have been very critical of the Colombian military links to the paramilitaries. They claim that while we focus on the FARC and ELN threats, we don't place much of an emphasis in urging the Colombian government to develop a plan to counter their threat. What is your opinion of this charge? What can the United States do to urge the Colombian government to arrest the paramilitary leadership?
- A. The Colombian Armed Forces repudiate the use of violence by all lawless groups—including paramilitaries. The Colombian senior military and police leaders completely understand and incorporate respect for human rights in their operations, training, and force structure. Furthermore, they have taken aggressive measures to ensure that subordinates of all ranks mirror their firm commitment to human rights as a matter of good order and discipline. They accept the moral imperatives of respect for human rights and sense that the practical application of human rights disarms the propaganda machines of their opposition while increasing the efficiency of their own units. Consequently, as a matter of policy and fact, they do not give tacit or active support to paramilitaries. When individuals disobey laws and regulations, the military takes appropriate action. A couple of examples include:
- General Tapias forced the early retirement of two Brigadier Generals for *alleged* links to paramilitaries (BG Rito Del Rio, Army Operations Commander and BG Fernando Milan, Director of Advanced War College)
 - General Tapias ordered COL Lino Sanchez bound over to the civilian court system for adjudication in his alleged involvement in the Mapiripan Massacre
- Q4. What is the Department of Defense willing to provide the Colombian military in terms of assistance? Would there be any limitations? What is the Department of Defense's plan for Colombia?
- A. The Department provides the Colombian military training, infrastructure improvements, transportation, intelligence support, and limited (non-lethal) equipment to support their detection, monitoring, and interdiction counternarcotics efforts. Statutory authority and budget constraints limit the scope and depth of aid to Colombia. As to Department plans, we will assist the Colombian security forces interdict drug trafficking by marshalling aerial, ground, and riverine interdiction efforts in the Source Zone of Southeastern Colombia.

Questions From Bernard Aronson

January 18, 2000

Responses to Questions:

Question # 1 Senator Charles Grassley

I think it is crucial for the Congress and the Administration to develop together a broad, bi-partisan, long-term strategy for Colombia. Such a strategy must take into account all aspects of the current crisis. They include the need to stabilize the economy, modernize the armed forces, enforce human rights standards, support the peace process diplomatically and provide training, technical assistance and aid in the counter narcotics effort. We need to do more to develop regional and international support for Colombia, including involvement and support of the European community, the United Nations, and the OAS.

Questions from Senator Bob Graham

Questions #1

The crisis in Colombia has already begun to spill over into neighboring countries. Peru, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela have all voiced concern about guerrilla activity crossing over their borders. I believe that increased pressure on the FARC and ELN, greater regional diplomacy in support of the peace process, and real incentives for progress at the negotiating table are crucial to avoid this destabilization.

Question #2

I believe that the Colombian government at the highest levels and in the law enforcement and military have a strong will to promote eradication in rebel controlled areas. However, some of those areas include the so-called "despaje" which was ceded to the rebels as part of the peace negotiations, which certainly complicates any eradication effort. I believe that Plan Colombia is a sound plan, but we should have no illusions that interdiction and eradication alone will be sufficient to resolve the narcotics problem, unless we make far more progress at home in reducing demand.

Question #3

I believe that the Colombian armed forces needs far reaching reform and training to increase its capability to carry out effective counter insurgency operations. That includes much greater mobility and training in small unit operations. I believe the current law that precludes high school graduates from combat activity should be eliminated. The United States should condition its assistance on these and other reforms. Human rights must

JAN. 19. 2000 10:56AM

NO. 177 P. 3/3

continue to be a strong condition of US aid also. President Pastrana has made significant progress in rooting out senior officers complicit in human rights violations, but that progress must continue, and the US should condition its military assistance on real and sustained progress, including breaking all links with the paramilitary forces.

JAN 19 '00 10:12

PAGE.02

10/18/99 MON 15:21 FAX 2028229002

IAD

002

From: Michael Shifter
Senior Fellow
Inter-American Dialogue

To: William Olson
Staff Director
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control

Subject: Responses to Additional Questions

Date: October 18, 1999

Senator Charles Grassley
Chairman, Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
Question for the Record

- 1) There has been a lot of talk about Colombia having to solve its own problems. Why should the US and the surrounding Andean nations be concerned at all about Colombia?

Colombia will have to take the lead in solving its own problems. But support of the US and other Andean nations will be critical to any final solution. Many important interests are involved, including spreading violence in an already troubled region, and a growing drug problem. In addition, all of the countries should be concerned about the erosion of government authority and deteriorating democratic institutions, along with a humanitarian crisis and a marked rise in the numbers of the internally displaced and emigration from Colombia. Colombia's multiple crises profoundly affect its regional neighbors and the US. It is important to organize a collective, coordinated response, in support of the Colombian government's own efforts, to minimize policies running at cross-purposes, and maximize impact.

Senator Bob Graham
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
Questions for the Record

- 1) What is the spillover effect of the Colombian narcotics trafficking problem on other countries in the region? Is there a risk of widespread political destabilization in the area, particularly if there is increased pressure placed on the FARC and ELN?

The narcotics problem is shared among all of the countries in the region, and needs to be faced in a collective, multilateral way. The evidence suggests overwhelmingly that if some aspect of the problem is successfully dealt with in one area, it will tend to emerge elsewhere. The "spillover" does not go in only one direction. The risk of political destabilization in the region will increase to the extent that "hard" and "soft" policies pursued by neighboring governments run at cross-purposes. While it is important not to overstate the risk of political destabilization in the Andean region, it is also crucial to recognize that there are legitimate security challenges that call for sustained attention and a coordinated response.

- 2) Is there sufficient political will and operational capability on the part of law enforcement and military forces in Colombia to retake the rebel-controlled areas so that the eradication program can be pursued with greater efficacy? Do the Colombians have a sound plan developed under which an expanded eradication program can be undertaken in the rebel controlled areas?

The Pastrana government has sought to undertake a peace process with the Colombian rebels in an effort to regain some authority and thereby be in a better position to address the drug problem. Eradication efforts carried out in the previous administration in Colombia were impressive in some respects, but drug production moved elsewhere, and the overall problem remained, or worsened. Colombian law enforcement and military forces may be able and willing to retake the areas, but such steps would undercut the Pastrana peace strategy of building confidence with the FARC. For the time being, this remains the government's main priority.

- 3) What is your assessment of the organizational and operational reforms that must be made within the various branches of the Colombian armed forces to ensure the efficient completion of its military and counter drug responsibilities? How does the recently released Colombian plan address these necessary reforms? How does the US ensure that these necessary reforms are completed?

Most indications suggest that the reforms the Colombian government is planning to modernize and professionalize its armed forces are appropriate and justified. The recently issued plan is consistent with such an effort. Apart from organizational changes, the armed forces need better equipment and some technical assistance. The best way for the United States to ensure that such reforms are successfully implemented is to provide assistance and be productively engaged with the Pastrana administration and support its attempt to achieve a political solution to the guerrilla conflict.

○